

CHRISTMAS

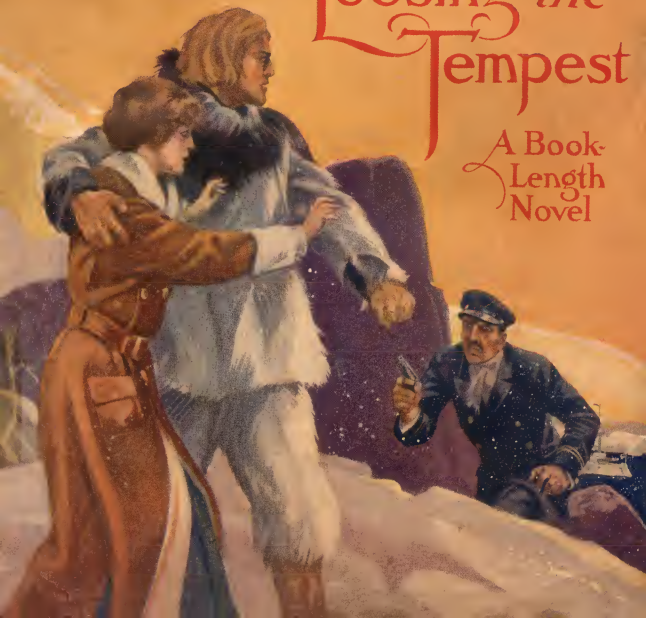
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LOOSING THE TEMPEST. The sequel to an iceberg experience that held even more excitement and terrors.....SEWARD W. HOPKINS 1

## FOUR SERIAL STORIES

BEFORE THE DARK. Part I.....LESLIE HAVERGAL BRADSHAW 87  
 FLIRTING WITH DESPERATE HAZARD. Part II.....R. K. THOMPSON 116  
 CASTAWAYS OF THE YEAR 2000 Part III.....WILLIAM WALLACE COOK 152  
 THE MOTOR-BUS MYSTERY. Part IV.....BERTRAM LEBHAR 176

## ONE NOVELETTE

WIZARD OR CROOK .....CASPER CARSON 193

## EIGHT SHORT STORIES

AT FIVE FATHOMS.....FRANK WILLIAMS 81  
 ONE CROWDED CHRISTMAS .....DOUGLAS PIERCE 108  
 THE NEW MAN'S DILEMMA .....MORTON P. HOBS 142  
 ON THE PLYMOUTH EXPRESS.....FRANK CONLY 171  
 MODERN WEAPONS.....CHARLES PHELPS CUSHING 190  
 A STEAM-ROOM FRACAS .....HARTRIDGE D. TYLER 217  
 IN THE LAND OF ILLUSION .....CHARLES G. BARNEY, JR. 225  
 THE LETTER HE DIDN'T WANT.....HOWARD P. ROCKEY 230

THE LOG-BOOK.....THE EDITOR 235

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS DEPARTMENT

is to quickly put the reader in touch with the newest needfuls for the home, office or farm—or person; to offer, or search out, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

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*Continued*

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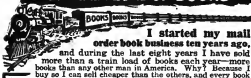
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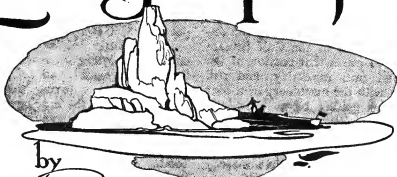
# THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXI

DECEMBER, 1912.

No. 1

## Loosing the Tempest



by  
Seward W. Hopkins

(A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE.)

### CHAPTER I.

#### COLD COMFORT.

**O**N shore I was Ordway's guest. Afloat, he was mine. Alas! There was a difference.

This difference at the beginning seemed to be all in Ordway's favor. The land under our feet made every danger we encountered seem as nothing.

When the series of strange happenings I am about to relate had its beginning, everything seemed to be to Ordway's disadvantage.

He sat huddled in his furs, shrinking down as low as possible, shivering in abject misery, while I, with a fatuous idea that I knew something, kept tinkering with a motor that had gone on strike in every one of its working parts at once.

"For the Lord's sake, Dagwell, give me some more whisky!" he growled. "I feel icebergs floating down through my veins and arteries. If I move I'll crack up."

I looked at him conjecturally a moment before complying. Whisky is a poor substitute for sun warmth or a steam radiator, I knew, but the fellow was suffering untold misery, and, as the expedition had been of my own suggesting, I could not refuse.

Anyway, his magnificent physique would, I considered, carry him through till I got the motor—which I thought of with an adjective I shall not print—to working once more.

I went to the cabin locker, poured out a liberal dose of the liquid fire, and took it to him. His half-frozen hands seized the glass, and his ice-laden throat guzzled the contents with

a peculiar gurgling sound understood by those who have been in the same unfortunate position.

When I returned the glass to its rack I took a goodly drink myself, for, to tell the truth, I was in little better shape than my stalwart companion.

There was not a speck of land as big as a teacup in sight. Neither of us could tell within a degree either of longitude or latitude where we were.

What we did know was that somewhere, far off the coast of Norway, we were afloat in a forty-eight-foot motor-yacht, absolutely helpless, adrift as might be a cork, gripped by the unforgiving current of the Gulf Stream that tries to warm that portion of the world and fails miserably, and still tinkering with the machinery of a boat about which neither of us knew any too much.

There was little use in philosophizing. The fact was, the situation was not growing to be, but had already become, dangerous.

A brief explanation of the conditions may tend to soften the inevitable opinion that nobody but two fools would be in any such predicament.

John Ordway and I, Homer Dagwell, were ardent hunters and fishermen. Moreover, we were lifelong friends. Fortunately for this friendship, we were both well supplied with worldly goods, and could therefore gratify our tastes for travel and adventure-seeking, without one living and traveling at the expense of the other.

But there was a peculiar spirit of independence in our methods. We never pooled the expense. Ordway carried one end of the pole, and I the other, no matter where our fancy led us.

Ordway, who was inordinately fond of big game shooting in Africa, would fit out an expedition, and I would pay the expense of carrying it on. After all, it evened up about level, and we were well content.

In the present instance the heat of Africa had been forgotten—or per-

haps too well remembered—and Ordway had succumbed to my lurid and seductive arguments in favor of the scenery and fishing of the Norwegian coast and the hunting in the forests of the interior.

I owned the motor-yacht *Northbird*, and therefore Ordway became the land host.

It is not necessary to enter further into these personal details. Suffice to say, we had established ourselves on the Norway coast, near the little town of Bergen. The place was a small estate on a bay well suited to our purpose.

In the *Northbird* we took long excursions, crawling along the coast, into beautiful bays, up cold and gleaming rivers, always enjoying the scenery, the fishing, and the bracing arctic air.

The *Northbird* was equipped for long voyages. She was well-cabined and her cuddy generously stocked with food. She carried plenty of fuel for as long a trip as we might in reason choose to make.

We had been on the wharfs at Bergen, a fishing village, when a fleet of codders came in. The sight of the big fish had inflamed us with a desire to go and do likewise. We went.

As happens sometimes to a motor, the machinery stopped all over. Of course, if one little thing happens to a motor it stops—all of it. But this time it did not seem to be one little thing. It seemed to be a lot of big ones.

Anyway, we were left without power, far beyond the land drift, and had been carried along in the relentless current I have mentioned before.

How far we had drifted I do not know, and the knowledge would not have helped us. Ordway was no coward nor weakling. He had a powerful frame, and I had seen him in moments of imminent danger when his bravery and quickness of thought had won my admiration.

But his nature was not adapted to floating without steerageway in a sea

as cold as water can be without freezing solid, and, as he had nothing to do with the management of the motor, he sat, as I have said, shivering even in his furs, while I, working with all my energy, kept moderately warm.

Perhaps the things I said to that motor brought from some unknown regions a little of the heat I felt.

We had been out three days. Our sleeping accommodations were good, our blankets warm, and we still had plenty of food. It was canned stuff, except for the fish we caught; but it sufficed.

The Northbird had been fitted to be heated from the motor, which also ran a little electric-heating apparatus in the cabin. As the motor had broken down, there was no heat. It was little warmer in the cabin than in the cockpit. And this was where Ordway sat, while I hammered and tinkered and swore.

"D-D-ag-well," chattered my joyous companion, "tell the j-j-anitor to t-turn on st-st-eam."

"It's all right, Ord," I said. "I'll fix it."

"I've heard j-j-anitors s-say th-that before."

Working over a refractory motor for two days has a tendency to exhaust one's patience, and I finally gave up and started in to prepare our dinner. Our galley-stove was still in working order, and we used a kind of oil made for cold regions we had purchased in Christiana.

But this, while it boiled coffee, or water, threw out little heat. There was no oven to the stove, or we might have made ourselves more comfortable.

There was still enough in the larder to furnish a good meal. We had caught a few fish, and with fried potatoes and a can of corn, that froze almost as soon as opened, thawed over the fire, and had to be eaten quickly before it froze again, we managed to make a decent meal, supplemented by a hot cup of coffee to put something like life in our blood.

After the coffee we smoked, having a good stock of cigars on board.

Ordway thawed out, and we played several games of cards, all the time drifting—somewhere. Whether we might sight the coast of Iceland, Jan Mayen's Island, or even Spitzbergen, we could not tell.

Had the Northbird been fitted with a military mast, we might have rigged up a sail with a blanket or two, and steered a course. But the only stick on the boat was a miserable toothpick to hold an anchor-light, and a pillow-case thrown to the breeze would have carried it away. Fortunately the sea was calm, and we were in no danger at all, unless we struck something.

The period was during the long northern day, and it made little difference what time we chose to sleep.

Our greatest danger, which now began to cause me some fear, was the lack of water. Sea-water, even when cold, is not drinkable, and our supply of fresh was rapidly becoming exhausted.

Naturally, in such a latitude, our thirst was not excessive. But it requires water to make coffee, and we could scarcely do without that—or, at least, we thought so.

When the usual hour for turning in arrived, the sea was calm, the glint of the aurora borealis shimmered on an iceberg some distance away, and the Northbird floated lazily, her very inertness almost driving us mad because it seemed so reasonable that we might compel the thing to do our bidding and carry us where we willed.

But we knew this to be impossible. Every device we could think of had been tried, but the hull moved only with the current.

Ordway stood for some time silently looking at the great berg. His hands were thrust into his pockets, and his attitude was one with which I was quite familiar. Ordway was thinking.

"Dagwell," he said finally, breaking the spell, and turning to me, "do icebergs travel against the current?"

"I never heard so," I answered, surprised at the question. "Why?"

"Nothing of moment at *this* moment. But I was studying that ice monopoly out there, and it is nearer than it was. We are being carried toward it."

I had not noticed the berg very much because my time and attention had been so taken up with the engine. But now, upon closer study, I saw that what he said was true. We were slowly drifting toward the great floating field of ice.

There was no way of estimating its extent. It rose some forty feet above the sea level, and seemed almost a mile in length and breadth.

Taking my glass from its case, I studied the thing more attentively. Ordway did the same.

We stood side by side at least twenty minutes looking at the monster before either spoke.

"Dagwell," he said then, "can you explain it? That thing seems to loom and loom. What is it?"

My heart felt a chill.

"The berg is turning," I said. "It is swinging round, bringing its broadside to bear on us."

"And that means?"

"Disaster, and probably death."

Ordway snapped his glass into its case.

"I'm going to get a wink of sleep first," he said. "We've got at least twenty-four hours to live."

He went to the cabin and was soon dead to the world in slumber.

## CHAPTER II.

### A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

It was characteristic of Ordway that he would grumble like an old woman at a little cold or discomfort, yet, at the approach of real danger, show as much regard for it as he might a snowball thrown by a child.

He might sleep, but there was no sleep for me. It is possible that I

was no bigger coward than Ordway, and also that he had no less physical endurance than I. It was merely an example of the difference existing in our natures.

I sat on the little steering-bridge in the bright light of what in any other latitude would be dark night, watching the oncoming of a danger, to avert which I had no power.

A sudden approach of peril that carries with it a battling chance brings to the surface all the fighting activity a man's spirit may be capable of showing. But to sit hour after hour and watch a certain and unavertable doom drifting down on one is, to say the least, disconcerting.

At twelve o'clock the situation had changed but little, and, feeling chilled, I made some coffee. The aroma of the coffee, or the noise I made rattling round, woke Ordway in the cabin.

"Has the American Ice Company got much nearer?" he droned.

I knew he was ready at a moment's notice to help do whatever there was to do.

"It is still swinging our way," I answered. "Have a cup of coffee?"

"Don't care if I do," was his answer.

He appeared in the galley door almost as soon as his words reached me. He was perfectly imperturbable, with no show of daredeviltry or braggadocio. He was a man to tie to—to depend on in any emergency. But, oh, couldn't he grumble at the cold!

We drank our coffee, I sitting on a stool and Ordway standing. He was fully dressed, his brown woolen shirt, with its great collar around his throat, giving him anything but a drawing-room appearance.

"Let's take a look," he said. "Going to smoke?"

"Guess I will."

Once more together we stood in the cockpit and watched the swinging berg.

I wonder if, in ordinary circumstances, the approach of death is ever beautiful. I mean to the person about to die.

To us, the approach of what seemed an assured end to our adventurous lives took on such a weird beauty that we forgot, during the time we stood there, that we were looking at an ominous fate bearing down on us as relentlessly as the quicksand sucks down its victim or the assassin's bullet reaches the heart.

The midnight sun touched the loftiest spires of the great berg, which, as it kept swinging its greatest length toward us, assumed larger and larger proportions, till the great, glistening monster looked like an immense cathedral, or a village of cathedrals united by protecting arches. The side was glistening white. The spires, upon which the sun was reflected so effulgently, were backed by a magnificent exhibit of the aurora borealis.

Ordway breathed a sigh of admiration.

"Dag," he said, "that is the most beautiful thing I ever saw."

"It certainly is a splendid sight," I replied. "Almost worth all we've been through to see."

"It is worth it all."

"And to think that magnificent thing is slowly coming down to crush us—to swamp and send us to death in these frozen waters!"

Ordway turned on me suddenly.

"Dag," he exclaimed, "don't let it."

"Well, go on; I've got a few hours to be amused. What shall we do? Jump overboard and tow this useless hulk back to Bergen?"

I knew that no human being could live half an hour in that icy water.

"No, there is no use making things worse. But we'll fight for life, Dag. You and I have fought before, and we'll fight now. Wait till the thing gets near enough for us to shake our fists at it. We'll defy it."

"I think I've heard of somebody defying Juggernaut—or was it the lightning?"

"Oh, well, the lightning is—just lightning. But this is a tangible, defeatable foe. And we'll best it."

"I'm game if there's a fighting chance."

"Meantime," he continued, "you get some sleep. I'll watch. If there is any change, I'll call you."

The hint was a good one, for I was really sleepy. Cold, as well as excessive heat, induces slumber. I was soon rolled in the blankets, dreaming of fantastic things dancing on ice-spires, and grinning snow faces gleefully anticipating what was coming.

It is needless to keep on with the details of our watch. The Northbird was drifting with the current, the same as was the berg. But there seemed to be some magnetic power drawing us toward the ice, while the constant swing of the farther end hastened the approach of the ice to us.

We ate, drank, and smoked, alternately sleeping while the other watched.

It was my turn to rest, and I was in sound slumber when Ordway woke me.

"Come out here, Dag!" he called.

"We'd better both be on hand now."

I joined him. The cold was terrific. We were bundled in furs, yet shivering. But Ordway seemed to give no thought to this discomfort. Danger was at hand. Every nerve and fiber of his being was alert, alive, and ready.

Only a short distance from us loomed the mighty berg. We could not see either end. The blank wall that faced us no longer scintillated with reflected light. It was black, ominous, relentless.

I had two long, stout iron-shod pikes on board. I got them loose without waiting for a suggestion, or speaking one. Silently I handed one to Ordway.

"Now," he said, "we are facing a straight façade that no human being, not even a climbing beast, could scale. But somewhere along this side there must be a ledge, or a crevice; some kind of opening. The thing for us to do now is to catch the ice with the spikes, and keep poling along till we find such a place. Of course, the danger—"

Then there was a boom, and then another, like a salvo of artillery, and tons of ice broke off and plunged into the sea not more than two hundred feet away from us.

"Lies there," I said, finishing Ordway's sentence for him.

"Exactly," he said calmly. "If we are hit by one of those things, they'll never put any monuments over our graves."

The boat was close to the wall of ice. We drove the pikes against it. With a mighty effort we turned the bow of the Northbird eastward, toward the end of the berg that was acting as the pivot on which the mighty mass was swinging.

Slowly we shoved the unwieldy boat along, and now we were no longer cold. Sweat poured from us as we toiled—toiled as neither of us had ever toiled before. We were fighting for our lives.

We had both of us met foes that could be defeated or killed. But here we had a mighty monster of the deep upon which no weapon we had could make any impression.

"Dag," called Ordway, who was in the bow, "I see a darkness ahead greater than here. I think it's a cave. Look out! Look out!"

There was a mighty roar. The sea seemed to come up and infold us in salt, cold arms. The berg seemed to turn over upon us. There was a swing, a crash, a smashing of something against my head, and then—unconsciousness.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A STRANGE REFUGE.

WHEN I recovered my senses in some degree I was lying on a great fur robe, with blankets all around me. The place was dark, and yet it was not dark. All around me was whiteness, but there was nothing I could see.

Above me there was no sky. No sun reflected on any spires. And it was not so cold.

I lay there a few minutes, trying to gather my wits. It was no easy task. My head felt sore, as though it had been hit by a club.

Gradually the whole thing came back to me. The drifting; the fight to keep from being crushed—the long, arduous poling along the wall of ice. Then I remembered the roar and the crash.

I managed to get to a sitting posture. I was alone.

A sudden grasp as of fingers as cold as the berg itself seized upon my heart. Where was Ordway?

In some miraculous manner I had been saved, and the Northbird and Ordway had been sent to the bottom of that relentless sea. Somehow, death in these depths seemed more terrible than in the warm, pleasing waters of the seas in which Ordway and I had visited islands where palms and bamboos and tall ferns grew.

Palms! Bamboos! Tall ferns! I laughed in an ironical way.

Suddenly, as I sat there bemoaning Ordway's fate, and realizing that my own was really worse, for there was no prospect before me but starvation, I heard a tapping such as a carpenter might make with a hammer.

I listened intently. Could this be the breaking of more ice such as I remembered before, when the great chunk had fallen into the sea? Was the berg beginning to break up?

The tapping stopped, and after a time was resumed.

It seemed to come from one spot only. I believed that if there was a general breaking up of the berg, these sounds would be all around me.

I struggled to my feet. I was on a broad, flat surface of ice. It was not smooth and slippery like the ice of a skating-pond, but soft and uneven, full of snow, offering an easy footing. I walked unsteadily toward the tapping sound, and as I progressed the sound increased in volume.

I saw, finally, ahead of me, the edge of the floor I was on, and across from that the beginning of another almost



similar. I advanced to the edge, and stood there, mute with wonder.

Some distance below me, on a ledge but a few inches above the water, was Ordway. The wreck of the Northbird floated, and from bow and stern the painters stretched to iron spikes that Ordway was driving into the ice.

He was working like a Trojan, as though he had not a minute to spare.

"Hello, down there!" I called.

He looked up and waved his hammer.

"Bully for you, old chap," he said. "All right?"

"Oh, I guess I'm all right. I'm a sorehead, though."

"I reckon you will be for some time, after the crack you got. Come down here. Go that way," and he pointed with the hammer, "and you'll find some mush. It's easy to get down."

I followed his direction, and half walking, half slipping, I was soon at his side.

"Old man," he explained, pausing in his work and surveying it while he spoke, "we are about the luckiest wards of Providence that ever lived. It was a miracle. Miracle? Why, there was never a greater miracle than this."

"Something seems to have happened, truly," I replied. "Tell me, what was it?"

"I'll tell you what it was. You remember I yelled that I saw a cave?"

"Yes; and I remember you yelled 'Look out!' I seem, however, to have looked in."

"We both looked in. At the mouth of that cave—which, by the way, is this cave—there was roaring, sucking whirlpool. Caused, I suppose, by the motion of the ice, and perhaps some undercurrent formed by the opening. The water swirls up against the side of the entrance like a mighty wave.

"Well, that wave caught the Northbird, whirled her around, smashed her up against the side, swept her inward, and hurled her, like a thing to be despised, clear of its clutch into this calm water. You were struck on the head,

or, at least, your head struck the ice, and you fell in the cockpit. Fortunately, I wasn't hurt.

"I got out on this ledge and hauled what was left of the Northbird farther in, to be clear of any inward rush of the sea.

"Now I've made her secure. You see there is no bruise below the water-line. We have all the stores, and are safe. Just how long we are going to be safe is a problem. But the thing is, we are safe *now*."

To my aching head the performance of the forces of nature in this instance was too stupendous for comprehension. That such a vast destroying force as the berg had seemed should have suddenly shown mercy was beyond my limited brain just then to understand.

But we were there, and as Ordway had said, we were, for the time being, safe. Just what prank the mighty iceberg would choose to play next no one could tell.

"Now she can't get away," went on Ordway, "what is your idea? Shall we leave all the stuff aboard and use the hulk as a headquarters, or take it all out and carry it up to where you were?"

"That requires some thought," I answered, feeling the gravity of the situation. "There are things to be reasoned out. To begin with, it is problematical whether those bolts you have driven into that ice will hold half an hour or half a year. The iron may melt the ice, in which case the Northbird would make a poor headquarters, indeed. Then, as you say, there is no telling how long we shall be safe. We have already seen one proof that the berg is breaking up. If she splits and comes down on us here, that will end it all."

"What you say is true. Well, then, go on. Your head isn't so very bad after all. I think I'll go crack mine against the ice."

"Don't do that. It hurts afterward. But now let's do some real thinking. Suppose we haul out the grub and

carry that to as safe a place as we can find. Then suppose we travel a bit and see if we can't get on the roof of this thing. We'll want the guns, of course. And we'll each want a hunting knife."

Ordway looked at me in amazement.

"What are we going to do? Shoot each other?" he asked.

"No, that would be a useless waste of ammunition. For, if we find nothing else to shoot, we'll die anyway. But there are two reasons for getting on the roof. You've been so accustomed to the big game hunting in Africa that you've never studied the possibilities of a big field of ice. There may be a seal or two. We might find a walrus. Something in the shape of a bear might be taking a siesta in a hole. Then there are always geese and other fowl."

"Bully for you! Now, certainly, I shall butt my head."

"The other reason is that from the lofty perches above we can, as the old berg moves on, look out for fishing vessels from the Norwegian coast."

"That settles it," said Ordway. "I'll bang a hole in this berg with my noddle. But first let's begin on your suggestion and get out the stuff."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A GREATER DISASTER.

WE began work at once. Ordway, whose head had not been crashed up against a wall of ice, toiled with greater rapidity than I did, but I knew that were our positions reversed he would have done the same. He was a fast, hard worker always.

First we took out the guns, two rifles and a fowling-piece, with the cases of ammunition for each, and carried them to the higher floor of ice, where they would assuredly be safe—as long as we were, and after that it did not matter.

Next we made sure of all our food stuffs, of which there was still quite a supply. Then the blankets, bedding, and our clothes.

After that came dishes, cooking utensils, the stove with its fuel. We found a spot as dry as any, removed from the edge of the floor, and in a sort of grotto. This grotto was Ordway's idea.

"You see everything will be safer here," he said, "because if there comes a split and the old shebang tumbles down in the middle, the roof of the grotto won't fall."

I grinned as I looked at the shimmering sides of the cave, dark, though made of white ice.

"When did you butt your head, Ordway?" I asked. "I didn't see the operation."

He merely grunted, and went on storing things shipshape.

"Now," he said, buckling a belt of cartridges around him from his left shoulder, "what next?"

"It's up to you, John," I laughed. "Afloat I'm captain. On shore you are."

A peculiar smile spread over his face.

"You are still captain. We are afloat."

I laughed again, for it was the truth. Men do laugh in the most dangerous situations. I don't think Ordway or I would laugh actually in the face of death. But we had, so to speak, passed through the valley, and were both sound and hopeful.

"Then," I said, "let's explore a bit. If there is one opening there may be others. There may be a way to the roof."

"Dag, if we ever get home it will be something to tell—climbing up inside to the roof of an iceberg."

"Well, I fancy a man well versed in these things wouldn't call this thing an iceberg. It is an ice field. As it splits up, and pieces go floating off, they will be bergs."

"This," he said with conviction, "is an iceberg."

"Field."

"Berg."

He had picked up the first rifle. I

chose the fowling-piece. Side by side we journeyed slowly along the ice floor, close to the upstanding wall, peering into the darkness for some other opening.

"Look!" he cried, pointing ahead.

We stopped in sheer astonishment and admiration. We had come to the end of the cavern. But it did not end blindly, darkly, abruptly, like most caverns. From a great hole that ran all the way to the top of the berg, issued a flood of light. And this shone down on a marvelous cathedral organ of ice that was a beautiful thing to look upon.

"Sorry I never took organ lessons," he said. "But it looks fit for any cathedral in the world."

The stalactites and stalagmites that went to form the organ gleamed and glistened in the glow from above and sent shafts of subdued light in every direction.

"Still," I observed, "this isn't getting to the roof. At least we have found the chimney. Let's now find a way up."

It required some search, but at last we did come on a spot where some corroding action had so worn the ice as to make climbing possible. After much effort, each helping the other as needed, we reached the top, and stepped out on the surface of the great field.

In every direction was ice—nothing but ice. Here and there were the spires we had seen from the Northbird and upon which the sun had gleamed so handsomely.

With our glasses we swept the horizon. There was no land.

In silence we looked at each other.

"Dagwell," Ordway said, "I don't believe anybody else ever had such an experience as this. I suppose explorers have floated off on cakes of ice, and perhaps were lost. But here, in a climate that is at least livable, we are drifting on a huge iceberg, with plenty of food, warm clothing, and guns. It is wonderful—wonderful."

"That's all right, Ordway," I answered, not quite so optimistic, "but what's to be the end of it all? Icebergs don't, as a rule, drift into harbors. Our only hope is a sail, and I don't see one."

"No, certainly not. Be satisfied with what the gods provide. One thing at a time. We are where we *can* see one if one comes along."

"True enough, Ord. We'll let it go at that. Now the next question is what shall we do about the stuff below? Shall we leave it there, or bring it up here?"

"What do you think about it?"

"Well, it's more comfortable there, yet we ought at all times to be here, and on the lookout."

"Then say we split the difference. We'll leave most of the stuff there, and bring our furs and blankets up here. This thing is bound to keep moving, and if it only holds together, we'll find a way out—or the way will find us."

So it was decided. We made a few trips, and brought comfortable furs from the cache, and kept watch. We took up our station at one end of the berg, and always with that long dismal view of the sea before us, strained our eyes constantly for a glimpse of one of the dingy sails from the coast of Norway.

It was cold, bitterly cold. We ran, jumped, played tag to keep warm. We gabbled incessantly about inconsequential things to keep from going mad. One man alone in that vast solitude could never have stood it.

One day a goose perched near us on the ice, and I brought it down with the fowling-piece. This added to our larder. We always, of course, had fresh fish when we wanted it.

We traveled all over the berg for bear, or seal, or walrus. Not a sign of any animal did we find. I had the luck to shoot two ducks. That made a further pleasing addition to our stock.

Guns, except now and then the fowling-piece, were useless. We left the rifle in the cache with the rest of the

stuff. We had got into the habit of taking a good look in all directions with our sea-glasses, and then, making no sail, would go below to eat together. When one slept the other watched.

But no sail came to cheer us. Day after day the monotonous existence continued, and we grew almost to hate each other. Two people cannot live absolutely cut off from all the world without growing tired of each other. But our reason, and our long years of friendship, kept us in check.

There were frequent booming reports like cannon as a piece of the floe would go plunging into the sea. There was an almost continual cracking sound that alarmed us at first, but to which we at last became accustomed. What it meant neither of us knew, unless it was the preliminary infantry practise getting the ice ready for the heavy artillery that accompanied the splitting off of big pieces.

One day Ordway and I stood at the very corner, looking off toward the southeast.

"Dag," he said, "it seems to me I see something away off there. It looks like a speck now. It isn't a ship—at least I don't think so. Do you see it?"

I looked carefully as he pointed. I saw nothing. I glanced at Ordway in some alarm.

"Oh," he said understandingly, "I'm not going off my head. Don't you worry about that. Perhaps my eyesight is a little better than yours."

"It never was before," I replied un- wisely.

"The sun on the ice blinds some peo- ple," he came back at me.

"If mine, why not yours?" I asked hotly. "This isn't Africa."

"No, but you—"

I don't know what he was going to say. I doubt if he did two minutes after.

There came a ripping sound, then the cracking of rifles increased a thou- sand times, and after that a boom that might have been heard ten miles. The great field trembled, and heaved as

though a volcano was about to break loose.

With that boom the berg split in twain, and the part we were on tilted backward, throwing us both down. Had it tilted the other way we must assuredly have gone into the sea.

Fortunately it did not go over. Yet, whether this were fortunate for us or not was to be seen. We stared at each other in abject consternation.

"My God!" shouted Ordway, with an accent I had never heard in his voice before, "there goes, on the other piece, all we've got to eat!"

## CHAPTER V.

### HUNGER AND TRAGEDY.

I FELT, at that moment, the most paralyzing fear I had ever experienced. It seemed as though my very blood froze solidly in my veins. From the expression on Ordway's face I judged he felt as I did.

For several minutes after he had made his startling statement we stood and stared at each other.

It was not, as I look back and re- member now, the fear of death that held us in icy thrall. We had faced that together many times when neither had shown cowardice or fear.

But to think what was before us! We were already half frozen, kept in condition only by plenty of good food and hot coffee and exercise. All three of these means of salvation had been swept away by that crashing roar that split the berg and parted us from our supplies.

There could be but little romping exercise on that sloping, slippery sur- face. What was left to us?

Our food, of course, was gone. But, as before, there might come within range of our guns a northern goose, or other fowl of the icy regions, but our cook-stove and oil fuel had been swept away from us on the larger por- tion of the berg along with our sup- plies.

So, also, had gone most of our blankets and furs. But one fur robe remained. That we had spread out on the ice to sit on when we rested from the almost incessant walking or running that was necessary to keep our blood in circulation.

What was left of the Northbird had gone also. And all our kitchen utensils, cups, plates—everything.

There remained for us then only long hours of hunger, the numbing of our bodies, the stifling of our voices, and the agony of starvation.

The thunder of the explosion seemed to accompany a repelling force, for the two pieces of ice parted quickly, and our lighter one was apparently hurled from the other as a meteor might be hurled from one of the heavenly bodies.

The gap continued to widen, till at least five hundred feet of water, filled with floating débris of ice, intervened.

Then Ordway, with his magnificent will-power, regained mastery of himself.

"Dag," he said, speaking calmly, "I don't know what the end of this may be, but now, while we are in possession of our senses, let us shake hands on a resolve, and stick to it."

"I'll shake hands with you on anything, Ordway," I replied as calmly as he had spoken. "What is it?"

"You know as well as I do, Dag, that men go mad sometimes in these conditions. Only the moment before that roar began you and I were on the verge of a quarrel. We have been in mighty dangerous places together, and have never even had a hint of a disagreement before. The ice-madness was coming on us. The shock of—of what happened—recalled us to our senses. Let us agree right now that no matter what comes, there shall be no hasty words between us. We can't afford it—we two."

I held out my hand spontaneously. He grasped it.

"Now," he went on, "we can't afford, either, to remain here idle, just

waiting for death. To wait for it is to meet it surely."

"What else is there to do?" I asked. "Come here a minute."

I walked to the edge facing the other portion of the berg, which may now be called *the* berg, as ours was but a floating fragment, and pointed to the ice-laden water between.

"I don't believe," I said, "that any human being could live in that water long enough to swim over yonder. Paralysis of the heart would probably follow the first plunge. But if you want to try it, I will, too."

He measured the distance with his eyes, studied the heavy cakes that jammed each other, then floated apart, caroming again on others, as the tide swept through the channel, and the waves bore the lighter cakes against the heavier ones.

"Our greatest danger wouldn't be the cold," he said. "It would be the impact of the ice-cakes. A swimmer caught between two of them coming together could hope for nothing. Let's wait a bit, and see how the berg acts. The two pieces may come together again yet. Who knows what tricks the currents will play in these waters?"

I remembered the cause of our incipient quarrel, and while Ordway was still studying the chasm between our cake and the berg proper, I took my glass from its case and looked long and steadily in the direction where he had claimed he saw land.

The atmosphere may have grown clearer, or in my calmer moments my vision might have improved, but certainly I did seem to discern, miles and miles away, what looked like a thin line of darker horizon than the sea itself afforded.

But the sight of land, if it was land, did no more than accentuate the hopelessness of our position. Had we known it to be a garden of Eden transplanted to that frozen zone we could not have reached it.

And with the taking away of our sheltering cave came the knowledge

that we were growing steadily colder. Heretofore, when one got too cold for anything like comfort he could go below, and making himself a hot cup of coffee, warm himself, leave another cup for the other, and so by seesawing back and forth remain at least in a fairly comfortable condition.

I doubt if anybody will blame us if at times now, even after our determination to remain calm, we felt something like despair stealing over us.

Sleep was out of the question. An hour's slumber out on the surface of our fragment of ice would end in death.

Naturally, conversation lagged. We kept a constant watch for a sail, but apparently this portion of the sea had never been discovered.

I think I have made it clear—if not, I will do so now—that physically Ordway was my superior. Not that I was weak, puny, or any more in fear of physical exertion than others, but Ordway was a man of great muscular power.

This being so, I felt that his suffering might possibly not be as great as mine.

Still, I remembered his shivering and grumbling in the Northbird under more favorable circumstances.

The hours passed miserably. And the more miserable we became the more we tried to relieve our minds with light talk.

"Dag," said Ordway, "if you were sitting in a warm corner of the Waldorf, looking out at the passing women in their furs, and the men in their coats, and the motor-cars and taxis, and a smiling waiter came to you and asked what you'd have, what would it be?"

"A dream," I answered promptly.

"Anyway, I'd rather go to a barbecue over in East New York during a political campaign. I could eat a whole quarter of beef without any effort."

Oh, the dreary, dismal, insufferable hours! The hunger that at first was merely discomfort, next horrible, finally dangerous. For, as we grew weak-

er, our power of resistance to the cold became less.

I did the best I could to exercise by jumping up and down, flapping my arms, and walking gingerly on the inclined surface. Ordway seemed to have lost his aptitude for that, and stood on our single fur, sweeping the ever-rentless horizon with his glass.

When thirst assailed me I chewed ice. But I soon found this would not do. It was not the ice of sweet water, and the brackish taste produced a peculiar nausea.

A tired goose from a flock settled down on our cake to rest. I picked up the fowling-piece.

"Oh, what's the use?" remarked Ordway. "We can't cook it."

I paid no attention to his rebuke. Some sort of insane hope sprang up in me, and I fired. Weak as I was, my aim was true.

I laid the gun down and went after the goose. It was, perhaps, four hundred feet from where we had been standing. I had walked the distance, stooped, and rose again with the goose in my hand when my heart was brought to a sudden cessation of action. Another rush of horror froze me, as I heard the report of the gun.

Swinging round, I saw Ordway lying flat on the fur.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A DESPERATE ATTEMPT.

I COULD not, if the future of my soul depended on it, portray here in mere words what I felt at that moment.

All the horror of what we had been through was forgotten. It was as nothing compared to what I felt surging through me now.

I was no longer cold. I forgot it *was* cold. My blood seemed to leap into furious action, and yet my heart appeared not to beat at all. My brain whirled and a thousand strains of music came from some invisible orchestra.

The strong man—the man upon whom I had looked as my superior in physical power and endurance, had proven unequal to the task. I had been left alone to bear the suffering.

I hurried back to him, in my excitement, still hanging on to the goose.

“Ordway! Oh, Jack!” I cried. “Why did you do this?”

He looked at me with glittering eyes.

He grinned in a strange, unnatural way, then began to babble.

“Tell ‘em—tell ‘em to play—to play—”

His mind was wandering. There was no use asking him questions. Frantically I began hunting for the wound. There was no blood to be seen.

It did not then strike me as being strange that he had not chosen his head, the unexposed part, and, therefore, offering no obstruction to the charge, as the place at which to point the gun.

The wound must, therefore, be hidden somewhere in his thick clothing with the blood held in check and surging about his body.

My fingers trembled till they were almost powerless while I tore at this garment, and then at that, striving to locate the wound. But there was no blood, no wound.

The strong man had simply gone under the stress, as is sometimes the case, unable to withstand the terrible suffering. Great strength needs something to feed upon.

But the situation now became a hundred times more desperate than it had been. To permit Ordway to lie there an hour was to let him die.

I moaned in the very bitterness of my spirit. All my own hunger and physical sufferings were forgotten. I rose to my feet, and in sheer wildness of agony of soul shouted at the top of my voice for help.

Think of it! In that dreary waste of waters, alone with an unconscious man, I called for help.

That merely illustrates the situation

better than a volume of description could do.

Perhaps that cry for aid was not in vain. At any rate, a wild, desperate change came over me. I hurled aside my despair as I would cast off a befouled garment. From a victim of the most horrible tortures, suffering from circumstances over which I had no control, impelled by some force I had never known before, I now leaped to the summit of my human power, and became a man.

Instead of being the unwilling victim of circumstances, I would be the master. Ordway should not die.

At least, so the desperate resolve shot itself into my brain, if Ordway had to die, then I would lose my own life trying to save him.

As I look back now, that wasn't much of a sacrifice to offer. Even if I remained inactive and let Ordway die I would follow in a few hours. But none of this entered my head at that time. I was obsessed by the one idea, that I *must save Ordway*.

I made my way to the edge of the cake nearest the berg. The gap had grown no wider. The ice had not thinned, but seemed to be more quiet.

The slant of the cake now brought that edge down near the water. Standing there on the hummocky surface, I could see the hull of the Northbird, which had, by some trick of nature, clung to the berg as Ordway had fastened it, and the face of the grotto being open to the light, I could see our stores piled neatly as he had arranged them.

I studied the rise and fall of the small ice cakes. I noted the open lanes running in crooked lines this way and that, and sought the most direct one from me to the Northbird.

Throwing aside my furs, I lowered myself into the water, and, with slow, deliberate, studied strokes, started along the open lane I had chosen toward the boat.

I was surprised to find that the water did not freeze me as I had imagined it

would. Instead, it seemed to put new life in me. I suppose I was already so cold that the plunge into the water gave my heart an impetus instead of chilling it to death as it might have done had I been warm.

Slowly, stroke by stroke, shoving aside each cake that bobbed in my way, I drove myself along till I laid my hand on the gunwale of the Northbird and pulled myself aboard.

Thoughts came quickly to me then. My only hope of saving Ordway was to hold my own brain well in hand.

From the boat to the ice was but a step. I went to the grotto and got a bottle of brandy that had not been opened. Fortunately it had not frozen.

I poured myself a drink that in ordinary conditions would have given me delirium tremens. The warmth of it was felt immediately.

I lighted the oil stove, and put what water remained over the fire. I would have a cup of hot coffee ready for Ordway when I got him there.

Then I took the bottle of brandy and a silver cup, part of the Northbird's cabin luxuries, and loosening the boat from the moorings Ordway had made, fastened instead all the ropes I could find and tie together, keeping the coil in the boat.

At that moment I regretted our neglect to bring a tender more than at any previous time. But the Northbird floated, anyway. With a pike I drove it slowly through the drifting ice cakes. They were close enough together to give me purchase, and gradually I groped my way toward the fragment on which I had left my friend, paying out the long anchor ropes and painters as I went. I reached the other piece of ice. So far I had been successful.

Would I find Ordway alive or dead?

## CHAPTER VII.

### BACK TO EDEN.

It was with this question quivering like an arrow in my heart that I clam-

bered on to the ice with the bottle of brandy. My furs lay where I had thrown them, and, as the water in my clothes was fast turning to ice, I hastily threw my coat round me. Then I hurried to Ordway.

He was breathing, but was now unable to speak. I poured a small quantity of brandy down his throat, then tried to lift him. I might just as well try to lift the iceberg itself. He lay a dead weight too great for me to raise from the rug on which he had fallen.

The fowling gun which, as I had supposed had done this damage, still lay where it was when I left.

I got my arms round Ordway under his armpits, and struggled slowly, painfully, but surely, back to the Northbird. The grade was down, and his feet slid along after me, so that the task was not so great as a struggle up-hill would have been.

My greatest difficulty was getting him into the boat. But I did manage it, and finally got him on a berth in the cabin. I then went back after the gun, the bottle of brandy, the glass, the rug, and the goose I had shot.

Having cleared everything of ours from the fragment broken from the main berg, I said, as I supposed, good-by to that piece of ice forever.

The work of getting the Northbird back to its original moorings was not so troublesome as it had been to cross the channel after Ordway. It had been for this I had paid out so much cable. All I had to do now was to stand in the bow and haul in on the rope.

Slowly the Northbird obeyed, and we swung out among the floating cakes, and, in a short time, I had pulled up alongside the floe where Ordway had driven in the bolts.

I soon had the boat fast again, and could give all my attention to my friend.

I made a steaming pot of strong coffee, and, as I raised him, he gulped it down.

"Ah!" he breathed, as I laid his head down again.



I knew this was a sign of returning consciousness, but forebore questioning him then. I brought fresh furs and wrapped him up snugly, believing the cabin a better place for him to recover than on the ice.

The change in our condition was encouraging. We were attached to what was still a great solid field of ice, again in possession of our supplies, and sheltered on the north by the wall beyond the raised floor I have mentioned previously.

The grotto faced the south, and there was a pleasant warmth from the sun reflected against the ice.

I again had the stove, and hunger was not to be feared.

In my efforts to rescue Ordway my own discomfort had been forgotten, but now returned. I prepared a substantial meal, cooking the goose I had shot. I opened a can of cranberries and one of pineapple. I made some more hot coffee, and baked some potatoes.

I had more than the mere thought of satisfying hunger in this meal. I had no idea how long we might be compelled to remain on the berg. I knew our stock of canned vegetables and fruit, pemmican and bacon and canned beef, with which I had stocked the Northbird at the beginning of our Norway visit, would not last long. We would soon be reduced to a diet of fish, eked out with an occasional goose if they continued kind enough to visit us. And I knew that such a life would not continue long without the danger of scurvy.

True, we had the privilege of boiling melted ice over the fire for bathing, but even the cabin of the Northbird, with the thermometer about fifty below zero, was not inviting for a bath.

I knew potatoes and cranberries and pineapples were all antiscorbutics, and thus it was with more than the mere idea of gormandizing that I prepared so appetizing a meal.

When it was about ready I visited Ordway. He lay with his eyes open looking around him.

"How do you feel, John?" I asked. He looked at me curiously.

"Say that again."

"How do you feel?" I repeated.

He heaved a great sigh of relief.

"It's true then. I thought it was delirium."

"What was?"

"Why, this cabin of the Northbird. When I woke up I saw where I was, but remembered I had fallen on the broken-off piece of ice, and that the Northbird out of reach across the ice-filled channel. I thought this was a dream, but now you speak, I see it is reality. But I don't understand. What happened? Did the two pieces come together again? Give me a drink."

I poured him out a drink, and, as my clothes were cracking with ice, took one myself.

"No," I said in reply to his question, "the pieces didn't come together. I got the Northbird over and back. Never mind how. But there is something I want to know. When I went to get the goose I heard the gun go off, and when I turned you were flat on the rug. I thought you—you had—"

He grinned at my hesitation.

"Why don't you say it? You won't hurt my feelings. You thought I had shot myself to escape a miserable death."

"Well—I—"

"And desert you. Did you really?"

"I didn't think of the desertion part. I thought you had taken the easiest way out. But I couldn't find any wound."

"Because I didn't make any. It seems to me I remember hearing the gun go off myself. I remember before I fell I got suddenly dizzy and whirled round and round. I tried to call to you, but somehow I couldn't make a loud sound. I suppose in my turnings I kicked the gun somehow and fired it."

It was the only possible explanation, and so it remained.

"Do you think you could go one of those Waldorf dinners you spoke of when there wasn't a shrimp in sight?"

"I could eat a rhinoceros."

"Well, I have no such delicacy as that to offer, but how would roast goose with baked potatoes, cranberries, and pineapple suit you?"

"Don't, Dag. You have just convinced me this wasn't delirium. Don't destroy your good work."

I laughed, and went to get his dinner. We ate together in the cabin, Ordway propped up in the berth, and I sitting at the table.

From the windows we could see the fragment of the berg still holding its own at about the same distance from us, keeping back the seas, thus giving us a fairly calm shore, if the edge of an iceberg can be called a shore.

The drifting loose ice moved slowly through the channel, and then back again.

Having finished our meal, Ordway felt well enough to smoke, so we sat there, idly, puffing at our cigars. To any one else, even then our position would have seemed most uncomfortable and dangerous. But compared to what we had been through it was like home to us.

Suddenly there came a bump under the boat. It was lifted, and almost turned over. Then it settled back with a splash.

From outside there came a tremendous noise like the exhaust of the Northbird's motor when in condition.

"What the deuce is that?" gasped Ordway.

"Just that, I guess," I answered. "But I'll see."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN IMPENDING CRASH.

I COULD not repress a cry of amazement, as well as delight.

Lying well away from the boat and the edge of the ice was a beast about seven feet long, with a smooth, oily skin, small head, and a dorsal fin I recognized. It was a dolphin.

Why this peculiar mammal should

have humped its way up under our boat and on to the ice I could not imagine, till it uttered its peculiar groan again.

I looked then past the stern of the Northbird, and saw a strange commotion in the water.

The explanation was at hand. The dolphin is an intelligent animal, and frequently, when pursued by its enemy, the narwhal, from whose deadly sword it always flees, it flops on to a low-lying cake of ice where the other fellow can't follow.

Well, I felt sorry for this dolphin. But my sorrow was much like that of a hungry man who looks lovingly at a fine, fat, strutting turkey, then wrings its neck and enjoys a good dinner.

I proceeded to put a couple of rifle balls into the small head.

I heard Ordway shout. No doubt he had an idea that we had been attacked by enemies. I hurried back to him.

"What was it? You shot something," he exclaimed excitedly.

"Ordway," I said solemnly, "the gods provide. How would you like a nice beefsteak?"

"Don't, Dag. I felt that way before I began to whirl round. Take another drink—a good one. That's a good fellow. Don't get woozy as I did."

"Never, Jack, was I in better control of my faculties. We have now on hand a supply of fine meat."

"Fish, you mean."

"Nix on the fish. This is *meat*. Real meat from a—well—a sort of cow."

"Come again. I can stand anything now."

"It's a dolphin. And, as you know, a dolphin is not a fish, but a mammal. This chap was running away from something else—probably a narwhal. Anyway, his running days are over. A fine piece of roast dolphin is fit for the gods. In fact, they were almost gods once. The ancients feasted upon them—only the rich could so entertain their friends."

"Where did you learn all this?"

"Well, I suppose while you were studying about ostriches and tigers and rhinoceroses and big things of hot countries I was looking at things belonging to the cold. Anyway, the meat of the dolphin is good, for I have eaten it. It is dark, and not like fish at all. Anyway, he is ours."

"All right," he said easily. "If a sea-cow happens to drop in for a call I'll take a milk-punch. And if you chance to lasso a sea-horse, I think a ride in the open air will do me good."

"Undoubtedly. But don't get too facetious here. The funnier you are the sicker you will seem. By the way, it seems to be unusually dark in the south. And the water beyond our friendly breakwater is getting rough."

He peered from the cabin window.

"That's a storm coming, sure enough," he said. "And we are in an exposed spot here."

"We are protected by the piece that broke off."

He gazed in a silent, contemplative way at that fragment for two minutes at least.

"You know more about this unholy region than I do. Are you sure that thing is a protection?"

"Why not? Won't it break the fury of the storm?"

"Perhaps — perhaps. I was only thinking."

"Well, come across with the goods. You were thinking what?"

"That light bodies are driven before a storm more swiftly than heavy ones. Moreover, that hunk of the American Ice Trust will get the brunt of the storm it saves us from. Now, if—"

He paused, and I knew he was right. I finished for him.

"If the storm drives that piece up against us—well, the only answer now is a question mark."

"Just so."

"Then let's get ready for the bump. We can't do anything to save the Northbird. We can drag the dolphin up into the grotto. We must put every-

thing into the grotto. And we must get in there ourselves when we see the bump coming."

"The bump won't come for many hours."

"Still, we can be ready."

Ordway was able to give me some assistance, and after my good dinner I felt fit for anything. We dragged the carcass of the dolphin up to the grotto. Then we put everything far inside, and left ample room for ourselves.

The Northbird we could do nothing with. She must take her chances.

"How about getting up on top out of harm's way?" asked Ordway.

"The path we went up was on this side, and we could probably do it again."

"We undoubtedly could get up there," I answered, doing some hard thinking on the subject, "but there is this about it: We would probably be shut off from our supplies, and shoved back into the very conditions we have just escaped. Here we have everything for our comfort. We can cook, eat, drink, and smoke. It is warm. I do not apprehend any great danger in here from the impact, should that cake be blown against us. The worst it could do would be to shut us in. A change of wind would separate the parts again. But if you want to freeze and starve, I'll tackle the job with you."

"No," said Ordway, wrapping a fur around him. "We tried one dose of that medicine. It is quite enough. We'll remain in the drawing-room."

We smoked and chatted, drank our coffee, and an occasional glass of something else, sitting on comfortable chairs from the Northbird. We had ripped the furniture out of her, and now had chairs, a table, and sleeping berths that made isolation on an iceberg far from uncomfortable.

We tried to get the motor out, but as we had no way of taking out the feed-tubes and tank this would be a useless waste of energy. Anyway, the thing wouldn't go, so what was the use?

We watched the growing blackness

of the sky. If the northern regions can have a long day it can have black moments. All around us the wind whistled and moaned and played weird tunes against the icy wall. I shivered as I thought of what might have happened had we gone to the upper surface and been caught in a heavy snow-storm, which seemed what was promised us.

We must have waited twenty hours at least in the semidarkness. We could hear the roar of the troubled sea beyond the barrier that was at once our protection and our menace.

Then suddenly a blinding sheet of sleet and snow smote us in our retreat, and a whistling sound preceded what would certainly be worse.

"The battle is on," said Ordway calmly. "May the strongest win."

## CHAPTER IX.

### A SAIL IN SIGHT.

THIS was not my first visit to Norway and the northern waters. True, I had never been as far north on the sea as we were at that moment, nor had I ever experienced such a storm.

We had congratulated ourselves on the fact that the grotto faced the sun. It now faced the storm, which was quite a different matter, and had no qualifying comforts.

The wind, blowing down on us from the back of the fragment, hit into our bones and caused us the utmost misery. Our teeth chattered as we tried to talk, and finally we gave up the effort.

The sleet and snow jammed in upon us, and covered everything with a thick coating of ice.

For hours this continued. A long silence was broken by Ordway. He placed his lips to my ear, and bawled at the top of his voice to overcome the roar of the storm:

"I'm hungry!"

I made a trumpet of my hands and yelled back:

"So am I. What are we going to do about it?"

"Eat," he returned in a voice that should have shaken the berg.

This was all right, saying we would eat. Eat what? Raw dolphin? The water was gone. There was none left for coffee. It was a question if we could make the stove burn, anyway.

But the pangs of hunger will spur the benumbed mind to activity if the goods are there, and we had plenty. I scraped up a lot of the freshly fallen snow, and picked out a large, heavy blanket.

"Hold this up as a wind-break," I shouted in Ordway's ear.

He grinned, took the blanket, and, with outspread arms, held it between the storm and me as I worked over the stove. Fortunately we had plenty of matches. Several flickered and went out before the stove was lit. But, finally, we had it going, and, while Ordway still stood with the shielding blanket extended, I built a barricade of boxes round the stove on the weather side, to prevent the wind from blowing out the fire. Then I proceeded to cut out a piece of the dolphin, and, after some effort, we made a good meal.

The falling snow was so dense we could not see what the fragment was doing. We could see nothing beyond the confines of the grotto.

Then, after hours had passed, we heard a crunching and grinding in the channel. The big piece was closing in upon us.

That was a terrible period of waiting. There was absolutely no way even to guess what would happen.

The coming impact of ice against ice might prove to be a good thing for us, or it might be our destruction. All we could do was wait hour after hour.

The crunching and grinding continued. From the sound I judged that the broken ice in the channel was being piled up and solidified as the ponderous weight of our lost fragment kept on its slow but imperious way to rejoin its parent berg.

"There goes the Northbird!" yelled Ordway.

From the direction of the motor-boat came the loud sound of splintering wood. The great force of the wind-driven ice was grinding her to pieces. Then the end came.

There was no distinct shock. The large portion of the berg we were on remained at first as firm as a continent. But there was a loud report as the fragment spent its last strength in motion, and lay passive, jammed against the packed drift-ice that was now as solid as the berg itself.

Then, in about ten minutes, there reverberated through the snow-laden atmosphere such a roar as neither of us had ever heard before. The berg trembled as the land does in an earthquake. Echo after echo, or roar after roar, shook the very air. It was like deafening thunder.

Then all became quiet again. The wind did not cut into us so sharply, and the sleet did not slap us so unkindly in the face.

Nevertheless, the hours of discomfort continued with but little abatement.

It came to an end at last, however, and the atmosphere grew clear.

The sight that met our gaze was amazing. There was no longer any channel. Not a single hole of open water could be seen. The fragment had backed up again to the berg, and between the two the drift-ice had been piled up in queer shapes and masses.

The Northbird had been squeezed, tortured, and ripped, and what was left had been thrown out on top, a mass of useless wood. I say useless—it proved to be far from useless before we got away. But, as a boat, the Northbird would never float again.

We were now shut in without a sight of the sea, unless we chose to leave our shelter and make a difficult and dangerous journey through the valley now formed where once had been a channel of water.

The sky remained clouded, and there was now no way to tell in which direction we were drifting.

"I suppose," said Ordway, "now the little flurry is over, we ought to get up on top and look for a sail."

I laughed.

"Do you think there is a sail in existence that would hang round here in that storm?" I asked.

"Possibly not voluntarily. But a boat might have been driven our way, much the same as the Northbird was."

"There is something in that, Ord," I acknowledged. "Come along. We'll have a try at it, anyway."

As I started from the grotto I picked up a rifle.

"What the deuce are you going to do with that?" he asked. "We have all the grub we want."

"This isn't for grub. It is for signaling—if we see anybody to signal."

Ordway nodded.

"Good old Dag. Sometimes I really think if you'd had a chance you would have amounted to something."

I led the way across the solidly packed drift-ice, and we walked up the inclined surface of the fragment down which I had dragged Ordway what seemed a year ago.

Reaching the top we found the wind was blowing strongly from the south-east, and that the tide was apparently setting toward the north.

"We are going toward the North Pole," said Ordway in a disgusted tone. "We don't want to run an opposition bureau against Cook and Peary."

"We are the playthings of the elements," I rejoined, taking a look through my glass off to sea.

When I lowered the glass Ordway was looking at me with a sad expression on his face.

"What's the matter with you now?" I asked.

"I'm sorry, old chap," he said. "That last remark of yours makes me—makes me fear—"

"What last remark?"

"The plaything of the elements. Is that from Clark Russell or Ouida?"

"Never you mind about my remark," I answered. "What special

brand of remark are you going to let loose about that?"

I waved my hand toward the southwest offing. He raked his glass from the case and clapped it to his eyes.

"A sail!" he yelled. "A fishing schooner! Old man, that storm did a lot of good after all. But can we get them?"

## CHAPTER X.

### HOPE GONE.

THAT same question had occurred to me the moment I had sighted the schooner and killed whatever enthusiasm I might have felt over the discovery. The vessel was several miles away, and was not headed in our direction.

"All we can do," I said, "is to wave something."

There was a suppressed excitement about both of us, as we watched the schooner through the glasses. She had all sails set, and had evidently outridden the storm in safety.

"Here," I said. "You fire the rifle a few times. I'll go get a signal."

I hurried back to the grotto and made a flag by fastening one end of a blanket to a pike-pole.

With this I returned to Ordway, and we began to wave from the highest point.

As we continued our wearisome employment disappointment settled down on me. There was no sign from the schooner that she saw our signal, or, if seeing, that she had any notion of giving us aid.

We waved the blanket till our arms seemed ready to fall from the shoulder.

"It's no use," I said. "They don't see."

"They must see it," insisted Ordway. "The fellows along the coast don't go to sleep after a storm like that. I'll bet there's a bewhiskered pirate looking at us now."

Almost as he spoke the schooner changed her course, and we were look-

ing at her stern as she sailed slowly out of sight.

"Well d— I mean good-by, gentlemen," said Ordway, in deep disgust. "That's the old time Viking for you. Noble representative of the sea-kings of the north. I'd like to get a wallop at him with a hammer."

"Perhaps he didn't see us," I suggested.

"Didn't see? I'll bet he saw. Imagine the skipper of a schooner, the only vessel in sight, not looking toward a berg as big as this one! And if he saw the berg, he saw us."

I felt as disgusted and discouraged as Ordway. We had watched so many hours, and had seen no sail. And now that we did see one, to be so completely ignored was maddening. It might be our only chance.

"Well, there's no use waiting here any longer," I said. "We won't see another sail to-day."

We slowly returned to the grotto, neither being in a mood to do much talking.

After this we settled down to a long, miserable, monotonous existence. The wind remained in one quarter, and the berg kept slowly drifting.

Still, as our food supply held out, we had no fear of the consequence just then.

There was fuel in the Northbird's tank, which we emptied. When that was gone we ground up fish and squeezed a crude oil from them, the blubber of the dolphin serving for a time.

Then our coffee gave out. Without that hot cup of coffee to relieve a sudden chill, our condition became a degree less comfortable. Our canned goods went next.

Every day we went several times to the head with our blanket-signal, but, though we did, on several occasions, see sails at a distance, none paid any attention to us.

Our feet and hands and ears were frostbitten. Our tempers became morose, and we scarcely held any conver-

sation, though our compact kept us from an open quarrel.

We neglected to wind our watches, and the chronometer from the Northbird became damaged. We knew nothing, cared nothing about the lapse of time.

Every time we lay down to sleep we did so with the feeling that we might never wake, and scarcely cared.

We seemed to have forgotten home and friends.

Ordway did, at one time, suggest that we keep a journal for others to read, and I nearly kicked him. There was nothing about this miserable experience I wanted anybody else to know about. Anyway, there wouldn't be anybody else to read, unless, our bodies were found a few years afterward, frozen and preserved in the ice.

We lived on dolphin till we turned our faces from each other as we ate it.

We thawed snow and ice to drink, mixing the water with whisky, brandy, or wine. This made the water taste better, and eked out the supply of the liquids. This supply we had been using very sparingly. But we reached the end at last.

We looked like savages. Ordway had a beard that sadly needed trimming, but it was a beard. My face was covered with a growth of broom-corn that rustled when I chewed anything.

We no longer made any attempt to comb our hair. It grew long and matted. We never changed our clothes. In fact, we had degenerated into a couple of hopeless, witless, useless dregs of humanity, not expecting to live beyond the limit of what food we had on hand. No geese came to visit us any more.

We seemed to have drifted into a region where fish were few. This would account for the absence of fish-vessels.

Then one day, in a fit of desperation, I drank more than my share of brandy, and Ordway glared at me. He reached for the bottle. I tried to keep it from him. No words were uttered.

He got the bottle and drained it, hurling the flask against the wall of ice.

We were going mad—together.

We sank into a deep slumber and almost froze to death. But that incident saved our reason and our lives.

"Good God, Ordway," I said, when I had stretched my stiffened limbs after my sleep, and he awoke about the same time, "do you realize what we are doing? Is your brain clear now?"

"Yes, and I feel like jumping off the berg."

"That won't do any good. We've got to brace up and be men. We are not in the habit of going to pieces like this. We've got to *brace up*, I tell you, or we'll be two raving madmen here; and think of the horror of it all. I'm going to take a look on the other end of the berg."

Since the closing in of the two parts neither of us had been up on the surface where we had seen and admired the glimmering spires as they reflected the sun.

I picked up a rifle, and Ordway took the fowling-piece. In our condition this was a dangerous thing to do, but our will-power held us together.

We found a way to the top. It was covered with snow, and once more the sunlight played upon the spires. To the north we saw a beautiful display of the aurora borealis, and the scene put new life in us.

"Look!" cried Ordway.

A flock of wild northern geese were coming toward us, and, as they hovered about the ice, we bagged three of them.

We went back to the grotto. There was no oil-fuel for the stove. We broke up some of the Northbird, and built a fire.

In this way another week passed. The sun remained warm. There was a resumption of the cracking of the berg we had heard at first.

The great thundering that had taken place when the two pieces had come together had never been explained.

One day Ordway exclaimed loudly, and pointed toward a thin line of water

where the drift-ice had been piled up. The two parts were separating again.

The next day we were sitting in the grotto eating. The cracking continued. It grew louder.

Suddenly that same loud roar was thundering through the air with the artillery of an army.

Then there was a trembling. Next a peculiar movement I did not understand.

Ordway leaped from his chair. The next instant I saw him go flying against the back of the grotto. I followed and crashed on the ice. The stove, the chairs, the bedding, all seemed suddenly endowed with life, and followed, resting against the side, high above the floor.

I lay on my back and looked straight up at a clear, cold, blue sky.

Then I knew what had happened. The berg had split again. A small portion, that containing our grotto, had broken off, and the heavy end had gone down. What had been the side of the berg was now the top, and we were in a basin surrounded by slippery walls.

Ordway sat up and we looked squarely into each other's eyes.

"If there is anything more on the program," he said, "let it come now. There is nothing like a surfeit of pleasure to sober one down to the realities of life. Do you know what will happen next?"

"Yes," I said, in my desperation, not exhibiting any emotion. "We are going to melt through the bottom of this thing and say good-by."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A VISITOR.

OUR icy world had gone completely topsy-turvy. What had been the back wall of the grotto was now the bottom of a deep basin. What had been the wall to the north of us was now the floor. What had been the floor was now a wall on the south, shutting off the warmth of the sun.

All that belonged to us, including our bodies, lay huddled in irregular heaps at the bottom of the basin. The stove was overturned, which made no difference because it contained no fuel.

It required some little time for us to adjust ourselves to these new conditions.

I knew that it was no unusual thing for an iceberg to turn turtle. Sometimes, when the portion above the sea-level is high and heavy, and the berg is within the grasp of a warm current, the melting of the bottom will make it top-heavy, and the overturning results.

But I had never heard of a change such as ours. What might happen next was a problem.

Our first work was to gather up our belongings and "set our house to rights."

We began with the guns and ammunition, because they were now the most important articles we had.

As a matter of fact, we had only these, our clothes, and our chairs that were of any service. Our fishing outfits we still possessed, but there seemed to be few fish for us to catch.

When we had once more made the place as comfortable as possible, we looked at the steep, slippery sides of the basin.

"I'd like to take a peep at the outside world," said Ordway, "and see what really happened. Although we know, of course."

"Yes, we know, but it would be interesting to look at," I replied. "The thing is to climb out there. These walls are twenty feet high."

"And smooth as—as ice. But we can't stay here doing nothing. Let's get to work and cut steps."

"There! That's more like the old Ordway. I like to hear you speak like that."

"Oh, well, there's no blubber coming from you. You got as strong on the bug-box as I did. Where are those fire-axes?"

The Northbird had been supplied with two fire-axes, which we had car-



ried away with all the rest of her furnishings. They were with the pile of kitchen utensils, now so useless, and we dug them out.

We chose the side of the basin that gave the longest slant, and began work. It was not our purpose to put any artistic flourishes on the job; simply to cut footholds to reach the top.

We accomplished this in less time than I supposed it would take, and soon stood on the top surface, which had been the wall.

We could see nothing to the south because the wall, which had been the floor, obstructed our view. The fragment of the big field that had been our first undoing was not visible, nor was the drift-ice in the channel. To the north floated the main portion of the field, solid, barren, uninviting. It was about a thousand feet away, the space having been increased apparently by the explosion.

All around was drift-ice. The berg containing our basin was now so reduced in size that from our position at the edge of the basin we could look in all directions at the water except, as I have explained, on the south.

We swept the horizon with our glasses, but saw nothing. As a matter of fact, it was to the southward only we might expect to find a sail, and that way was barred.

But even as we stood there, there came another boom, and the big field split again about in the middle. We had an opportunity of being witnesses from a safe distance of the same phenomenon that had upset us twice.

"She's breaking up," said Ordway. "It's only a matter of time when this piece splits. Well, we've got to make the best of it while it lasts. And—look there."

He was pointing up at the top of the wall—that had been the floor. I looked as he pointed, and laughed. I could actually laugh.

Hanging from the bolts Ordway had driven in the ice hung the splintered remains of the old Northbird.

"She's going to stick to us while we last," said Ordway. "How can we get that wood down here?"

It hung fifty feet above our heads.

"It will come down. The sun is thawing the ice, and the bolts, now they are getting the full benefit of the warmth, will let go."

This proved to be the case. In about ten hours the bolts began to loosen. A portion of the splintered hull fell now and then, and finally the whole thing came down with a crash.

We chanced to be "out on deck," as Ordway called it, when the thing happened, and we walked over to the wreck to view it.

Ordway glanced at my face.

"I don't blame you for looking so somber, Dag," he said. "She was a gallant boat. It's a great loss."

"I wasn't thinking of the gallant boat business," I answered, "nor the loss. But I was thinking just the same."

"You looked as though you had the affairs of state on your mind."

"I've got something on my mind that is a blamed sight more important to us than all the affairs of state in a dozen capitals."

"I'm in. It's your deal. Give me all the cards."

"I'm thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea to pick out the best planks and build a raft. Then if this ice turns rotten and goes to pieces, we can still keep afloat."

"Great! Let's get at it."

But it was, even after we had united our efforts, a hopeless task to attempt to construct a raft that would hold both. There seemed hardly an entire plank left in the deck. Of course, the superstructure was practically useless, and the hull below the water-line was smashed to kindling-wood.

We gathered enough of this for several fires, and carried it to the brim of the basin.

"After all," I said, "we'll have to do our cooking, if we get any to do, up here. We can't do it down there."

"Why?"

"Because we'll melt the bottom of the basin."

"True enough, old horse. Well, we haven't much chance to cook, so it doesn't matter. I'll tell you what we can do, though. We can drive a couple of bolts in the ice up here, and fasten a rope to them, to make the ascent and descent easier."

"Good idea."

This we proceeded to do, after which we were both tired out, and made our beds as best we could, and fell into a long sleep.

When I woke I looked at the edge of the basin and gasped.

Peering over the edge, with its wicked-looking eyes fixed in something like curiosity upon me, was the head of a walrus.

I turned cautiously to get my gun, then stopped and lay perfectly quiet. Ordway was already aiming a rifle.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A LEAP TO HOPE.

THE moment Ordway fired I sprang from the furs and, grabbing up a fire-ax, rushed up from the basin as rapidly as I could. I had no idea the first shot would kill the walrus, nor that Ordway would get the second.

I was right. Wounded the fellow was, but not killed. Perhaps he would have died later in the water. But he never got there. I caught him as he was flopping toward the lowest point of the berg, and soon despatched him.

Here was good cheer. Here was meat and oil to cook it with. The stove we had neglected was no longer to be despised.

Ordway soon joined me and fairly danced in glee.

"But what gets my goat," I said, "is that the fellow is here at all. He ought to be near shore."

"Perhaps he was on a spree and lost his way home."

"Well, there's no use hunting for

explanations. He has saved our lives for a still longer period. Lend a hand."

There is no use going into details about the walrus. It was the story of the dolphin over again.

We were now drifting rapidly to the southward, and the berg was melting about as fast as it traveled.

What would eventually become of us nobody could say. If the ice broke up while we were still in the open sea we were doomed.

But the walrus, like the dolphin, came to an end. We had no food. The berg was melting, and the bottom of the basin was water. We had looked north, east, and west, day after day, but we saw no sail.

Our brandy, whisky, and wine were gone. We were rapidly losing our strength. We had tried to chew the skin of the walrus, but that was useless.

We were conscious that we were in a warmer current and warmer atmosphere than before, but all we could see from the deck of our berg was floating ice. Some as large, some larger, than the piece we were on.

We knew our chunk wouldn't last much longer, but neither said much about it.

We realized we had drifted to the south, but how far we could not tell.

We spent but little time in the basin now. The water was about three feet deep. We had our furs on the upper floor.

"Dag," Ordway said one day, trying to speak cheerfully, "it's about due. Let's say good-by while we have our senses."

I took his outstretched hand.

"Good-by, old fellow."

"Good-by, old man."

Then we sat on two furs and looked each other in the eyes. It was like a game—watching to see who would do something first.

Suddenly there came that familiar cracking sound, and then the roar, but not so loud as the great ones we had

heard. The wall, that had obscured our vision to the south, fell with a crash into the sea.

"My God, Dag! Look! Look!"

With this cry Ordway fell flat on his face, unconscious.

There was little wonder in it.

For a moment I lost myself. I felt my reason going. With a mighty clutch of will-power I hauled myself back to life and looked again.

I knew that in northern waters there is an ice-mirage the same as on the torrid desert. Was this a mirage that was driving me insane?

Before me stretched land! Not five hundred feet away was a rugged shore. A great forest of beech and birch and spruce spread out to the south and southeast.

I staggered to my feet.

"Ord," I cried, "wake up! Don't give way now, when we are safe. Don't! Get up, Ord. It is really land."

He moaned.

"Ord, I tell you it is land."

There was an ominous cracking under my feet.

"Ord! We've got to go. We can swim it. Come."

He didn't move. The cracking became louder.

"Ord, for God's sake, come. We've got to swim for it. Get up."

He stirred.

"Let me alone. I might as well die now," he said. "I'm all in."

"Land, I tell you. Land! Get up. This ice is going to pieces."

He made no move. I was desperate. I knew from my former experience I could not lift him. I would not go and leave him. Oh, if I had but a bit of brandy left! There was not a drop.

"Ord, don't you want to live?"

"No. To the deuce with living."

Something—I don't know what to call it—seized me. Call it insane fury, call it anything you like.

I fell upon him. I kicked him. I smote him in the face, on the chest, everywhere.

I called him sundry disagreeable names. I aroused all the fighting rage there was left in him.

He struggled to his feet and came at me with a fury; that was what I wanted.

"Catch me!" I yelled with a loud laugh, and, running to the edge of what was left of the ice, I plunged into the sea.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MAN AND BEAST.

MY ruse succeeded beyond my expectations and most ardent desires.

Ordway let out a bellow that would put a mad bull to shame, and came plunging after me, yelling in his fury that "he would show me."

Just then I did not feel like being from Missouri. But I had roused him, which had been the purpose of my assault.

But Ordway, lying supine, waiting to die, was one individual, and Ordway enraged, and bellowing for vengeance, quite another.

The plunge into the water seemed to bring back to him all his energies, and he followed me like a porpoise. I made straight for the rugged bank, sometimes swimming round a big piece of drift-ice, and sometimes ducking and swimming under. Ordway always kept exactly in my wake.

We had gone perhaps half the way to land when the roar of the splitting ice came, and I glanced back over my shoulder to note the havoc done. Ordway, too, looked back, so the time lost was equal.

The end of the berg had split off, but, from where I was in the water, it seemed as though the portion containing the basin had been left intact.

I reached land first, and had clambered to a high and dry position when Ordway came climbing after me.

I braced myself for a fight. I knew he was more than my equal if it came to a pitched battle.

There was no use keeping up the getaway. I knew nothing of the land we were on. Of course, I had no idea the land contained savages. That it was an island I knew. And in those northern latitudes there are no savage islands.

I had punneled Ordway unmercifully. The only thing for me to do was to meet him, take my punishment, and then patch up our friendship again.

As I saw him scrambling up the bank puffing and blowing from his exertions in the water, I got myself in readiness to meet the shock of battle.

"By cracky," he bawled, as he stood upright and shook the cold water from his clothing, "you did that in great shape. Shake, you cold-water lobster, shake. That's twice you've saved my life in spite of myself."

He held out his hand, and a broad grin spread over his face.

I would have been less surprised had he knocked me down. I took his proffered hand.

"I was afraid the ice would split and let you down between," I explained, rather lamely.

"So it would. Don't you see where it chopped off? Right where I was lying."

"But what came over you? You would like a calf led to the slaughter."

"Dag, I'm no good as a collector for an ice company. Give me gas or electricity. Put me in a country where the thermometer sizzles at midnight and I'll stand anything. But your confounded frigidity knocks me out. Great smoke, though! If I'd caught you within a hundred feet I'd have drowned you."

I laughed.

"I'm glad you didn't catch me. But the plunge and exercise did us both good. How does it feel to have solid ground—*ground* made of dirt and stones—under your feet again?"

"Bully. But what ground of dirt and stone is it? Have you any idea?"

"No. I have lost all reckoning. I have no more notion what part of the

north Atlantic we are in than you have. Or if we are in the Arctic Ocean. But it's land. That's the main thing. It may be an island off the coast of Iceland, or even the coast of Iceland itself. It may be Spitzbergen. But it's land."

"Yes, it's land. And now that we have this land under our feet, it seems up to us to do something, and do it quick. The temporary nerve that cold bath gave us will wear off. We want something to eat. We need—"

"Run!" I yelled at him, and pointed past him. He gave one look behind and followed me.

A grayish white bear, big enough to knock our two heads together, was coming toward us at an awkward lope.

There was nothing for us to do *but* run. Our guns were still in the ice-basin, and there was nothing at hand to serve as a weapon. And to me that healthy-looking bear seemed the embodiment of strength as, with his mouth open, his tongue lolling out, he came romping after us.

Now, to stand in a zoological garden and look at a bear awkwardly marching up and down, with half his legs for feet, it seems as though it might be a simple matter to get away from one. But given a free run for his long bounds, a bear, like the sun, "do move."

The beast was gaining on us, and we rushed through a coppice of birch-trees, and came out on a clearing. To my amazement, a small log cabin stood there, and in front of it a man.

He looked at us with as much astonishment as we displayed in seeing him.

"A bear!" I shouted, not knowing whether he could understand or not.

At a glance I saw that he was white, but he was so enveloped in rudely shaped fur garments that nothing more could be distinguished except that he was larger, even, in build, than Ordway. He was fully six feet tall, and his calm eyes took us in without a smile or other show of emotion.

I sank pantingly down at the cabin door, and Ordway almost fell on top of me. And the bear, disregarding the close approach to a habitation, came lumbering on.

The man did not utter a sound, but stepped inside the cabin, returning at once with a short spear. So armed, he met the bear face to face with a composure that drew from Ordway and me a simultaneous breath of admiration.

The spear was poised but a second; then, driven by an arm that seemed to have the force of a steam-engine, it went through the shaggy neck.

A mighty roar of pain and rage came from bruin, but, instead of dropping dead, as I expected he would, he grabbed the spear and broke it off.

The shaft had apparently gone through the fleshy part of his neck without touching the wind-pipe or spine, for, with eyes that seemed to burn red with rage, the animal rose to meet his enemy.

Not a sound came from the fur-clad man. He moved forward instead of away, as though a hand-to-hand conflict with a bear was a daily pastime.

The beast roared his rage again. I expected the man to draw a knife or pistol. He did neither. As the bear clawed at him, dragging fur from the garment he wore, the islander seized the open jaws and, with what I could see was a tightening of the muscles of the entire body, spread them. Then ensued the most terrific battle to the death I had ever witnessed.

They swept round in a circle, the bear clawing and trying to hug his antagonist; the man bending, turning, to avoid the powerful forelegs, but never relaxing his hold on the open jaws.

Ordway and I were so spellbound neither of us could move an inch to help the intrepid islander.

Then there was a sickening, crunching sound, and the man hurled his enemy to the ground with the lower jaw hanging loose.

Pulling the broken spear-point from

the animal's neck, the conqueror raised it and drove the point straight through the wounded beast's heart. He lay dead on the ground, and the man stood up.

"Fresh meat," he said. "Now, who are you?"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ISLANDER.

ORDWAY and I looked at each other in absolute stupefaction. This man who killed bears with his hands could speak English, and did not seem overjoyed to meet us. The thought flashed through my mind that I would prefer to encounter a tribe of savages in the South Seas rather than this man alone, if he proved unfriendly.

There was no menace in his words, looks, or actions. He simply wanted to know who we were.

I had scrambled to my feet and tried to make a bow.

"Sir," I said, "we are two shipwrecked Americans. We have lived for a long time on an iceberg, that has just finished breaking up off your shore. We swam to land, and left our guns on the ice. The bear you just killed chased us, and we had no weapons. Nor did we have the strength you have to fight him. So we ran, and were fortunate enough to stumble upon you. We thank you."

He stood looking gravely at us for two or three minutes.

"What country did you say?"

"We are Americans. From the United States of America."

"You are not. It is too far away. I know."

I stood aghast. Here was a man, a little more than full-grown, speaking English with an indescribable accent, but English, just the same, who disputed the statement that we were Americans.

"Why not America—we can't be so very far from it," I answered. "You have been in England?"

"No. But I know where England is. It is a country where they have a woman ruler."

"Not now," I answered, my amazement growing every second. "The queen is dead. There is a king in England now."

The information did not seem to affect him in any way. He walked to the bear again and felt its fur.

"Good coat," he commented. "Make me a good coat."

Up to this time Ordway had said not a word. He had stood staring at the islander with eyes that expressed as much astonishment as I felt. He spoke at last.

"My friend," he said, "on that ice we just left we have many things that will be of use here while we stay. We have guns, clothing, furs, cooking utensils, articles from our motor-yacht which was crushed in the ice. Have you a boat?"

"Boat? Wait."

He stopped inside the cabin and brought out a book.

"Boat," he repeated, and turned the leaves.

"Oh, I know. I have not got a boat. I have a—a—what is it now?—a—cat—a cat—"

"A catboat?" I asked, feeling hope well up within me.

"No, no boat. A cat—"

"A catamaran?" asked Ordway, whose experiences in hot seas led him to think of this.

The man nodded gravely.

"That is it. Where is this ice?"

"That way," I said, pointing.

"Come."

There was neither fear nor welcome in his manner. We looked in vain for any evidence that others lived with this strange being. So far as could be seen he was alone, king of the part of the world he inhabited, with no subjects.

We followed at his bidding. He took us to a small, but well-sheltered bay. A hook of land ran out on the north side, and curved down, leaving on the south an opening. In this bay was moored

the strangest looking craft I had ever beheld.

I had seen the proas of the Philippines, the outrigger sailing craft of the Malays, the casco, the junks of the Chinese, the canoe dugout, the walrus-hide fishing-boats of the Innuits, every kind of odd craft known, but none like this, for it was the only one of its sort in the world.

First of all, it was a raft. Logs had been laid fore and aft, and then crosswise, till the top of the pile was about a foot above the water. Then on each side an outrigger log ran the length of it, and at one end, the bow, there were two poles, one on each side, between which was stretched a sail of skins.

Aft on the logs there was a bench-seat, and resting in a fork of a trimmed tree lay a long pole for steering.

Running before the wind, the thing could be sailed by a baby. But the yachtsman who won the international cup through excellent seamanship couldn't handle that craft any other way. There was no change possible in the position of the sail. Yet, if the islander ever left his shores aboard his craft he must have a way of getting back again.

The surface of the raft was large enough to hold everything we had on the berg.

"Will you sail us to the ice?" I asked. "I can handle a boat—the ordinary kind of boat—but I don't think either of us can do justice to this type."

"Yes," he said simply. "Come. Show me where is this ice."

There was a breeze, and as the islander untied the skin-rope with which his ocean monarch was moored we floated lazily out of the bay; and, with a dexterity and a knowledge of wind and tide that knocked me silly, he took that crazy aggregation of logs straight to the berg, or, rather, what was left of it.

Ordway let out a yell of joy as he leaped up on the ice.

"Everything is all right, Dag," he said. "Now, indeed, we are in luck."

The islander sat on the bench, holding his craft close to the ice while we removed our goods and chattels. When we appeared with the stove he eyed it suspiciously.

"What is that?" he asked.

"That is a stove to cook food with," I explained.

"But it will burn up."

"No; it is made of iron."

"Iron? Let me feel."

Having satisfied himself that iron was a hard substance, he relapsed into his almost saturnine silence till Ordway appeared with the guns.

"What are those?" he asked.

"These are guns."

"Guns? Yes, I know. They make a noise and kill men."

"They kill bears as well as men. We'll show you the next time one comes along."

Our strange host paid little attention to our furs and other clothing. He seemed to know all about them. Ordway brought a suit-case containing our toilet articles, safety-razors, brushes, combs, and what-not, which we had not used since our despair began on the ice-field. This we did not open, or we would have spent the day answering questions. When the willow yacht-chairs were brought out the islander's eyes opened wide.

"Them chairs?" he said. "I know."

When Ordway had put them on the raft the islander promptly left the bench and sat down in a chair.

"Very good," he pronounced solemnly. "The woman ruler sits like this."

His remark was explained later when we discovered, among the many other things he possessed, an old print of Queen Victoria seated on the throne.

Having regained all our stuff, we informed our host of the fact; and the crazy catamaran took us back into the little bay with as much precision as a catboat could have done.

Without delay we removed all our things to the cabin.

"I'm tired and hungry," said Ordway. "Let's have grub."

I was as faint from hunger as my friend. All his peculiar weakness of will had vanished now he had solid ground under his feet.

He looked around for a fire.

"You want to eat?" asked the islander. "Come."

He did not go inside the hut, but led us some distance away. Here the land was rugged, hilly, and rocky. In the side of a rise of ground we saw the entrance to a cave. We entered this. The peculiar pungent odor of smoldering birch came to us.

We wasted no time in examining the place, which seemed to be a series of small caverns. Our first need, then, was food. Investigations could come later.

In the center of the second cavern a fire burned on the floor.

"You keep this fire burning all the time?" I asked.

"Yes. He told me. I got—what you—oh, matches. Yes, ship matches. But must save and save, so keep fire burning. Sometimes go out, then use match."

"Well, so you have companions here," I said.

"Com—"

"You live here alone?"

"Yes. He dead."

"My friend's name here is John Ordway," I said, "and mine is Homer Dagwell. What is your name?"

"I don't know. I got no name. He called me Boy."

## CHAPTER XV.

### A HABITATION.

IN a chamber of the cave that was lighted from the main opening, and also by a hole that seemed to have been cut in the roof, we found a heavy table made of spruce. There was a bench on either side.

There were curiously wrought eating utensils to take the place of knife

and fork, just as a Chinaman makes use of chop-sticks as substitutes for the same.

Neither Ordway nor I made any attempt to interfere with the islander as he set about preparing the meal. We strolled outside the cave and among the beeches that formed a thick growth to the south.

"Dag," said Ordway solemnly, "what do you make of this? Have you noticed the fellow's face particularly?"

"What I could see of it, yes."

"What do you think he is?"

"He is either English or American."

"I thought the same thing. But this is a puzzle. How did he get here? How long has he been here? Where did he obtain his prodigious strength?"

"All in good time, Ord. I've thought of all those questions, too. But we are too hungry to waste time now. Wait till we get outside that bear meat, and we'll put him through a sort of third degree. He's friendly enough, anyway."

"Friendly, yes. But he did not express any excess of joy. I've read of people who were shipwrecked and lived on lonely islands for a time, and when they were discovered went through all sorts of hysterical stunts to show their delight and gratitude. This fellow doesn't seem to care a hang."

"He certainly isn't very enthusiastic. But then—you can't expect a man who tears a polar bear apart with his hands to show the same amount of emotion a woman would."

"Emotion! That fellow has about as much emotion in him as the motor of the Northbird after it broke down."

The odor of meat being roasted over a fire reached us, and we walked slowly back.

"Dinner is ready," said the islander.

We stood and looked at him again in amazement. He had thrown aside the great fur covering he had worn,

and stood in a suit of dressed skin that fitted his figure tightly.

He was the most magnificent man physically I had ever seen. Every line of his body indicated strength. He was heavy, but there wasn't an ounce of superfluous fat or flesh on him. His shoulders were square, his neck neither too long nor too short, his arms and legs symmetrical, and his head a model for a sculptor. He was, I judged, about twenty-four or five years of age.

There was none of the unkempt, sordid, greasy appearance so common among those who live for years in fur countries where bathing is not part of the daily curriculum. He was as clear cut and as *clean* a giant as could be imagined.

He waved his hand toward the cavern that contained the table and benches. It was a graceful wave, not fast; but there was that in it which suggested if you stood in the way that gracefully waving hand might knock you down.

Without a word Ordway and I, who had sunk apparently to a mediocre level among mankind, obeyed. We entered the eating cave and sat down.

Immediately the islander entered with a great roast of bear meat on a big flat board.

He next brought in a big wooden dish filled with a steaming vegetable.

"Potatoes!" howled Ordway. "And good ones."

"Yes," said the islander, "I have a farm."

Ordway looked at me, and I looked at Ordway. Neither of us could speak.

The islander left us, and next brought in a peculiar urn carved out of wood, in which was a steaming and aromatic liquid.

"Coffee!" gasped Ordway. "You don't mean to say you have coffee?"

"No, this is not coffee. He called it some kind of berry. I don't remember the name. They grow here. He put them in clay, and then in the fire, and said they would be like coffee. I never tasted coffee."



"You keep speaking of what 'he' said and did. Who's 'he'?" asked Ordway.

"Mr. Donaldson."

"Where is he now?"

The islander pointed out to sea.

"Did he leave you here alone?"

"He was out fishing. He was hit by a black dolphin. He was drowned."

"And were he and you all that lived on the island?"

"There was another. Eat. Your food gets cold quick here. When you have done we talk. Please—laugh not at the way I speak. He taught me how, but since he was drowned I have spoken to nobody and I forget."

"The amazing thing is that you can speak at all. You are excellent in your English. How long have you been alone?"

"Fourteen years."

"Good Heavens!" breathed Ordway.

The islander, still with his handsome face utterly immobile, continued his efforts to entertain us, and sat on the other side of the table drinking the concoction made from the native berry, which proved very satisfying.

Perhaps it is needless to say that Ordway and I made a good meal. Still, after our experience it would not do to gormandize, so we stopped eating while we still had some appetite left.

"You have a wooden house," I said, "yet apparently you really live here. Isn't the house comfortable?"

"In summer it is well enough. But in winter the cave is more warmer. No, I mean more warm—warmer. That's what I mean. If you had tried hard to learn from a kind man till you were ten years old, and then had spent fourteen years alone, you would understand."

"We understand now," I said. "It is marvelous. Tell us more."

"There is much to tell. I am very glad in my heart you have come. It was very lonely."

He said it as a child might speak of an hour alone without its mother.

Very lonely! Fourteen years! And he sat there, speaking as calmly and evenly as though it had been fourteen days. And Ordway and I, having each other after years of friendship, were ready to fly at each other's throat after a short time spent on the ice.

I looked at the man as I might have looked upon a Pharaoh come to life, telling me that three thousand years a mummy was a lonesome sort of proposition.

"And you see," he went on, harking back to the subject of the cave, "he told me always to keep the fire in here. The rain and snow cannot put it out."

"Your Mr. Donaldson must have been a wise man," said Ordway.

"He was. He knew everything."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BOATSWAIN'S LOG.

THE meal being finished, the islander rose and disappeared into another cavern. From it he came again with a handful of little rolls.

"It is not tobacco," he said. "Mr. Donaldson liked to smoke, and he tried the leaves of the trees, but preferred this. It is the leaf of the same bush that grows the berry I make for coffee."

We each took one, but noticed that he did not.

"I seldom use the smoke," he said. "I was but a boy when Mr. Donaldson was drowned, and did not smoke. I make some, and some nights sit out on the shore and watch the stars and wonder what the world is like, and where I came from, and who I am. It was all very lonely."

I could see pity gleaming in Ordway's eyes, and I know I felt it.

"And now that we have come, and of course will try to get back to that world of which you know so little, would you come with us?" I asked.

He looked at me steadily.

"I have books," he replied. "I know people do and say things I know

nothing about. Would you have me with you? A fool?"

"Fool!"

Ordway and I exploded the word in the same breath, and Ordway nearly fell off the bench.

"Man," I said, "don't ever call yourself a fool. So far from being a fool are you that you are a king among men. But let us get at your history a little way. We are tired, and need rest. But while we smoke these cheroots tell us of your life here, and how you came."

"It is all very strange," he answered. "There are papers for you to read. He wrote after the other died."

"Who was the other?"

"His name was Boatswain."

"You—you mean he was the boatswain of a ship?"

"Mr. Donaldson called him Boatswain. He died when I was very little. His leg was broken. He was going to build a boat to go to the big world, but a tree fell on him. Mr. Donaldson told me about it when I had got older. Mr. Donaldson said he did what he could, but something got to be the matter and Boatswain died."

"What do you remember about the world before you came here?"

"Nothing. First remember I have is when Mr. Donaldson had me on his knee telling me things."

"What did he tell you?"

"He told me somewhere maybe I had a father. He said maybe not a mother, because he thought the sea take my mother when the ship go down."

"So it was a ship, eh? Do you know the name of the ship?"

He walked into the same apartment from which he had brought the cheroots, and came out with a piece of wood two feet long. It seemed to be the name-plate that is sometimes screwed to the side of the pilot-house on a small vessel, or alongside the after deck-house on some sailing craft.

I took it. The gilt letters had faded, and had been scratched. But I could make out the word Voluna.

I handed the board to Ordway, who read it as I had.

"Was your mother a passenger on the Voluna? Of course, she must have been, if you were a baby."

"Boatswain didn't know, and Mr. Donaldson didn't know. Mr. Donaldson told me there were three women on the ship. But he did not know anybody."

"What's the use making him go all over this, Dag?" asked Ordway. "It must be a painful subject. Let's get the papers he speaks of and see what the real history is."

Without a word the islander rose. He came back from the same room dragging a sea-chest with him. It was old, dingy, and broken. But it had preserved whatever had been entrusted to it, and he took out a book.

Whether he looked upon me as the leader of our forlorn expedition, or because I was nearer to him, I don't know, but he handed me the book. Ordway settled himself comfortably, and said:

"You read a while, Dag. When you get tired I'll take it up."

The book was withered and wrinkled. It had once worn a cover in which red was a predominating color. But this had been washed in salt water, and the red was yellow.

I opened it at the first page. On the fly-leaf I saw:

Log kept by Boatswain Anderson, of the Voluna, after she went down in longitude 64, 4 west of G., and latitude 64, on August 24, 1887.

"That brings our friend's estimate of his age right," broke in Ordway. "He was ten, he says, when Donaldson was drowned, and has been alone fourteen years. He is twenty-four, and—but go on."

The Voluna was a small passenger-ship, plying atween Copenhagen and New York. Captain Bjarlson. We sailed with seven passengers. I did not know the names of any passengers. There were three women and a baby

boy, but when I was on deck all three women had so much to do with the little boy I couldn't tell which was the mother.

I am writing this in English as good as I can, because if anything happen to me, Mr. Donaldson, he take it up, and it will all be same langwidge.

The Voluna was an old ship, and belonged to the firm of Michaelson and Anderson, of Copenhagen. Mr. Anderson, of that firm, is my mother's uncle, so I have a berth on his ship.

The Voluna get in latitude 64 and four degrees west G. when biggest storm catch her. Drive her north, and she get far out of her course in latitude 64 and long. 4 west of—

"Hold on, man!" broke in Ordway. "You are coming out the same hole you went in at. The storm struck her in 64 and drove her north to 64, which was far out of her course."

"That's the way it is written," I said. "The poor fellow was no doubt in great distress, and got mixed. But the script on the fly-leaf gives 64 and 4 as the spot where she went down. I suppose it would be impossible to tell where she was when the storm hit her."

"Well, that is a matter of no importance now. We will accept the figures as indicative of the spot where she went down. Go on."

The ship had sprung leaks all over, and the water was full.

"He means she was full of water. Go on."

The crew was brave and got passengers in boats. One woman, the boy, and Mr. Donaldson, got in my boat—the boatswain's cutter. I had four men. The woman, she was most crazylike, and scream all the time. The little boy, he cry too, but the woman make for us a spectacal of noise.

We still have much storm to fight, and one sailor, he go mad and jump overboard. We fight like Hades all time against big wave. Then come more big wave, and the water full in the boat. The woman she think the boat tip over, and she throw the boy at me. She yell: "You swim! You take the boy." And she jump in the sea and yell.

"Good Heavens," said Ordway;

"and we thought *we* were in hard luck."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MR. DONALDSON'S WILL.

PAUSING in my reading as Ordway uttered his exclamation, I glanced at the islander. His eyes were clear, his face as immobile as ever. The pitiful narrative of a hysterical woman's self-destruction seemed to have absolutely no effect on his emotions—if he had any—which I began to doubt.

I continued reading.

After the woman she jump overboard, everybody seem in bad way. Sailors mostly is superstitious, and the sailors in my boat, three left now, got much afraid. They row not so good as before, and I swear at them. But it is no use. Mr. Donaldson, he take the boy and hold in his arms, because I have all I can do to steer the boat.

Then a big, monster, large wave come, and the boat tip over. I grab Mr. Donaldson, because I hear him cry out, and I think maybe he cannot swim. But Mr. Donaldson he swim pretty good. Anyway, Mr. Donaldson and I, we say we save the boy. The sailors, they so frightened and superstitious, they flop and cannot swim good. All them sailors drown. Mr. Donaldson and me, we get on the bottom of the boat. We see the boy is alive. We see land, and we make all try as hard as we can to get to land. So we do. But the boat is broken by the rocks and is no good no more.

I know not what land this is. The next day Mr. Donaldson discover a cave, and he take care of the boy while I go explore. It is an island. I do not know any such island on the chart. It is maybe ten mile long, and three, four mile wide. Plenty tree—birch, beech, and on some high places mountain-ash.

I found some berry, dark red, and I eat some and take some to Mr. Donaldson.

I paused here for a breathing spell.

"He says nothing of game, beast or fowl," said Ordway.

I resumed.

Next day. We make our home in cave. It is dry, and much more warm

than outside. To-day I went with a club to the rocks on the north end and kill a small seal. We have meat now. Mr. Donaldson have matches, and we make fire in one part of the cave, and I will cut hole in top for chimney. To-day things are floating in from wreck of the Voluna.

One thing comes floating to shore is a chest from the captain's cabin, which was on deck. It is a wooden sea-chest. In it we found many tin boxes of wax matches maybe he takes to America to sell or give to friends. These wax matches are made much in Denmark by one business-house. We think this a great prize, and Mr. Donaldson say we must preserve them.

We keep the fire in all the time. We do not know how long we stay here.

The boy is well. He is a fine little fellow, and Mr. Donaldson say if we never find his parents, who may be dead when we get away, Mr. Donaldson take boy as his son. Boy sits on floor of cave and suck seal-blubber like Eskimo. He is great kid.

"He is yet," commented Ordway with a laugh, looking at the islander, who returned the look in a friendly way, but did not smile.

I resumed the reading.

Next day. To-day I made some spears. I saw a bear on the rocks, and we will have bear meat. There are many wild geese also, and I will make some bows and arrows. Mr. Donaldson has examined the berries and will dry some and roast them, and he says it will make good coffee. We found a nice, sweet spring and little stream, so we want for no water. But we have not any sugar nor milk for our coffee.

This is the same day. I made a bow of ash, and it will send an arrow strong enough to kill a goose, but not a bear. We must use spears for bear. Boy is well.

There was a hiatus now, and the next entry began:

I think this about September ten. All this time I did not write anything because there was not much to write. Every day much like every other day. A box of books come floating in from the Voluna last week. Mr. Donaldson show much delight. He says he can teach the boy to read when he gets older. He says something about diffi-

culty in teaching without object lesson. I don't know what he means, but he knows everything.

Every day we keep fire going. In the cave the wind does not blow, and rain cannot put it out. We keep broken wood all the time to dry. We took off all the boy's clothes and make clothes for him out of sealskin and bear fur. He look like a big ball of fur. He is very funny kid. He never cry.

Every day we watch for boat. Mr. Donaldson say he think this island is called Orsgov, which he say belongs to no nation now for something he try to explain what he says international law. I don't understand. Last night I found a barrel of potatoes rolling on the shore. They are fresh, and from the Voluna.

Mr. Donaldson say the fishing is not good here, and so we will look long time for sail. I think I make a boat to get away. We might reach Iceland."

The journal kept by the boatswain at intervals, always growing longer, covered several years. It told of the hardships of the two men and the boy, having nothing with which to work the wood to make a boat, but constantly, day after day, striving to overcome this difficulty. They had, by the time six months had gone over their heads, reached the conclusion that no fishing-vessel would come near enough for them to signal. They saw sails in the distance frequently, but received no replies to their waving calls for help.

Food seemed to be plentiful, and each entry gave the condition of the boy as satisfactory.

The final entry was as follows:

We have been here now five years. All hope of leaving the island is gone. We can rig up a raft, or burn out a log for a canoe, but without tools we cannot make a water-tight boat. To-day I was burning round the trunk of a tree to fell it, and it did fall. It fell on me and broke my leg. I am laid up in the cave, and everything now depends on Mr. Donaldson. I know English better now than when I began this journal, for Mr. Donaldson has commenced teaching the boy, and I study with him. My leg bothers me with pain, but Mr. Donaldson says he thinks it will be all right.

We have plenty of food. Mr. Donaldson dries sea-water in the sun and we have salt. We are dressed in skins and furs now. Our clothes all wore out. The boy's clothes are in the captain's sea-chest. He is a fine boy, big and strong. He can talk as good as I can now. Mr. Donaldson says he is a wonder.

This ended the boatswain's journal. The next entry was a month later, by Mr. Donaldson:

Poor Anderson is dead. I shall miss him much, for a braver, nobler nature I never knew. About a month ago he broke his leg while felling a large beech, and though I made splints and bandaged it, there was something about it I did not understand, and blood-poisoning set in.

I presume the predominating influence for evil has been our restricted diet. The only vegetable we have had is potato. The barrel of these spoken of by the boatswain, I divided in two parts. Half we used sparingly for food. The other half I planted in a small patch of ground I dug over with a wooden spade I made. It was a difficult task, but for two years we have had potatoes from our own garden.

The supply of the dark red berries, a sort of elder, seems inexhaustible. I have chosen some of the best bushes, trimmed them, and have succeeded in enlarging the fruit, but with a diminution of quantity. This, however, is compensated for by the improved flavor.

One discomfort I felt at first was the lack of smoking-tobacco. I have been a great user of the weed, finding it soothing and conducive to consecutive thought and concentration. I tried the leaf of the berry, and find it a fair substitute.

I am making considerable headway with the little fellow. He is quick to learn, unusually calm and steady for a mere baby, and in muscular power goes beyond any child I ever knew. He grows fast, and if he lives will make a splendid man.

I am teaching him from the books thrown ashore from the Voluna. I do wish there was something to establish his identity—his parentage. The boatswain and I frequently talked over this matter. At first we believed his mother to have gone insane and drowned herself after hurling the baby at the boatswain. But now, after years

of thought, I am constrained to believe that the woman was not the boy's mother. She—the woman in the boat—was of a highly strung nervous organization, hysterical to a degree, and there is no trace of this in the child. Moreover, as I recall the woman, she was small, frail, and not likely to be the mother of a young giant, for such the lad will prove.

He seems to dread nothing. Fortunately there are no serpents or poisonous insects here, or I would fear for his life. He would fondle a cobra as readily as a kitten. He learns with a remarkable precocity. I almost fear this characteristic, as precocious children I have learned seldom bring to maturity the realization of their youthful promise.

I wish to state here, and now, lest that befall me which has befallen the boatswain, that I do, with all legal right and authority, adopt this boy as my son and heir. Legal documents, notarial seals, and all such, are of course impossible. But I am unmarried, and there is no obstacle to the fulfilment of my wishes in this respect.

I have, in the State of North Dakota, some interests in some mining properties, which have not, to my knowledge, developed any wealth. I had in the Centropolis National Bank, fifty thousand dollars on deposit, and in the safe-deposit vaults of the same institution, United States bonds to the amount of two hundred thousand. I know this is not a vast fortune, but the boy, if he ever leaves this island alone, will be penniless and friendless, and I call upon any person who may discover him and this book, in the name of God to carry out my wishes honestly. If, when he is found and returned to a civilization he knows nothing of, I am dead, all that I have is his.

"You are rich!" said Ordway, looking at the islander.

"Is that much money?" he asked.

Ordway, who was worth millions, studied the matter.

"Fifty thousand dollars in cash, with two hundred thousand in United States bonds, might be considered a very snug sum to find waiting for you."

"How do you use this money?" Mr. Donaldson told me, but I was small. I do not remember. Here, when I see a thing, I want to go get it."

"I foresee," remarked Ordway, as he helped himself to another cheroot, "that when you get to civilization you will be president of a trust."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE GUARDIANSHIP.

THERE was a great deal more to the journal and the contents of the captain's chest to be examined. But my eyelids were getting heavy, and Ordway sometimes nodded while I read. I closed the book.

"I suggest a snooze," I said.

"I second the motion—or, rather, the lack of motion. I'll bet you a bearskin, since money is no good here, that once I get flattened out I won't move for twenty-four hours."

"I'll give myself forty-eight. We've got to sleep on a hard bed. Our bedding from the Northbird is soaked."

"The Northbird," repeated Ordway. "How long it seems since there was a Northbird. Why, to look back, it seems years since we sailed out of Bergen Harbor."

"It does," I assented. "And it may be years before we sail back. But we sha'n't starve, and this island won't go to pieces like the iceberg. Come along."

"Come along where? What hotel have you in mind? This is as good as anything."

He proceeded calmly to undress.

"Some of the furs are dry," I said.

"I have plenty of furs," put in the islander. "Just look."

He led us to the inner cave. It was dark, but after a moment we saw, in a dry corner, a great pile of bear and sealskins.

The islander hauled out some of these, and in a few minutes, divested of our clothes, which we had not had off for weeks, we were rolled in warm furs that the islander had cured himself, and became dead to the world.

If it can be said that a man revels in sleep when he is totally unconscious, then I reveled. No sound came inside

the cave to disturb us. The wind might whistle outside all it chose, and bring, if it blew that way, chilling blasts from the north. They could not touch us.

How the islander occupied himself while we were asleep I don't know, nor did it matter. A feeling of absolute security contributed to the soundness of our slumber. There was no ominous cracking to forewarn us of the terrible roar to come, and the split that might send us to the bottom of a chilling sea.

No possibility of enemies springing on us disturbed our repose. The islander was a friend. Not, thus far, an enthusiastic one, so far as outward expression went. But there was no doubt that he was happy in our presence. He had said so plaintively that the fourteen years alone had been lonely.

When at last I woke I did so much like a man recovering from a long period of unconsciousness induced by illness or a blow. My brain had become numb with sleep. But gradually I recalled where I was, and sat up.

The furs with which Ordway had enveloped himself were thrown in a pile, and Ordway gone. I dressed, first warming my clothes at the fire, near which we had placed them to thaw and dry.

I found Ordway standing on the shore, looking off at sea.

"Any sail?" I asked.

He laughed.

"If, after twenty-four years without a sail, one should come the first day we are here," he said, "I would at once subscribe myself a firm believer in miracles. But I am in no hurry. After our experience on ice, this looks pretty good to me for a time."

"Yes, but not too long a time. I don't want to spend years on this island."

"Nor I, and I don't intend to. I feel like a new man after that sleep. What a ninny I was—a boob—a soft cake. I, a hunter of big game, a fighter of Boxers and of savages in the Solomons, to go to the deuce on an iceberg."

"There is some difference. You are no fighter of cold and hunger, Ord. Given a gun, club, or pistol, and a dozen savages, and I'll back you against the world. But cold—you go down before it like a baby. I can stand the frost, but, as you know, great heat wilts me.

"There was nothing surprising when hunger and cold knocked you out. But that's a thing of the past—ancient history. Where is our friend?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since I woke up. Hunting, I suppose."

"Say, isn't it great to know he is provided for when he gets to civilization?"

"I've been thinking about that. • I don't know—I'm not much on the laws governing such things. But will it be there?"

"What? The money?"

"Everything. Donaldson wrote that there was no legal obstacle to his adoption of this fellow. But he did not say he had no living relatives. If it was proven that Donaldson was a passenger on the ill-fated Voluna, anybody—a brother, or cousin, or second cousin, grandfather, forty-second uncle—could obtain his wealth after waiting a certain length of time, death being assumed to have occurred when the ship went down."

My jaw fell.

"Let us hope for the best. Now, what are we going to call him? We can't keep on saying 'my friend,' and such nonsense. He must have a name."

"Well, Donaldson adopted him, so his name is Donaldson."

"And for a first name?"

Ordway grinned. "If he wasn't so evidently an American or Englishman, I'd suggest 'Odin.' If he isn't a god of the north, I'll eat raw seal. I see trouble ahead, Mr. Homer Dagwell."

"In what do you see trouble? 'Getting away from here?'"

"Oh, no; that hasn't begun to bother me yet. We'll get away. We have been preserved for some purpose by an all-wise Providence who sees more in us than I do. We'll get away, and we'll

take him with us. But think of this. He is far and away the handsomest fellow you or I ever saw. His head is matchless. His skin, reddened a little by this atmosphere, is smooth as a girl's. His eyes are beautiful, and childlike in their innocence. His strength is prodigious. And—"

"Shoot the cream off the milk. I know you've reached the *pièce de résistance*."

"He has never seen a woman."

I almost fell over backward. The mountains of possibilities for good and evil that were immediately conjured up in my brain by Ordway's simple remark staggered me.

What he said, and what he intimated, were true.

We had something of a proposition on our hands. Here was a man twenty-four years old, handsome as a god, strong as a giant, proportioned like a piece of Greek sculpture, without a single idea how a woman looked or acted. He did not have the slightest memory of his mother, nor of the woman who hurled herself into the sea from the boatswain's boat.

Assuming that the money of Mr. Donaldson was still intact waiting for a claimant, or, in case it had been claimed, possible of recovery, what would take place? We would launch into the world—a world Ordway and I knew only too well—this handsome fellow with a fortune, who had never spent a cent in his life, and knew no more about the value of money than a cat.

The victim of remorseless and conscienceless rogues of both sexes, robbed right and left, dragged into vicious companionships, his magnificent manhood sapped by the environs into which he would be drawn, all these things burned into my brain and almost seared it.

"Ord," I declared, "I get your meaning—too well. We have got to be his guardians. We've got to lead him right. We must take him into society where he will see nothing but

good. We've got to fight like the deuce to keep the harpies from him. Or may God have mercy on *our* souls."

Ordway said nothing. He simply held out his hand, and I clasped it. The guardianship was assured.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### WHAT CRUSOE DIDN'T KNOW.

WHEN the islander finally appeared he carried in one hand a goose, and in the other a skin bag filled with berries. A bow was slung over his back.

"You had a good sleep?" he said interrogatively.

"Fine! Bully!" replied Ordway.

"And you see, while you were asleep I have been busy. Sometimes many geese come here, and sometimes a few."

"You are a good shot with the bow," I remarked.

"I must hit what I shoot at. If I did not, I would have nothing to eat."

It was noticeable that, even in the short time we had been with him, his speech had begun to improve. It was clear that Mr. Donaldson had made a thorough job of his education as far as he could go. I wondered how thorough it would have been if the unfortunate man had not drowned.

"We have decided to give you a name," I told him when he had begun preparations for another meal. "As Mr. Donaldson adopted you, you are entitled to his name. We are stuck for a Christian name."

"Christian name? The name of one who loves God?"

I was staggered again. It was clear that Donaldson had made the beginning of such teaching, and it was risky ground for either Ordway or me to tread upon. I explained what was meant by Christian name.

"What was Mr. Donaldson's first name?" asked Ordway.

"I don't know. He always called me Boy, and I called him Mr. Donaldson, as he told me to."

"What did the boatswain call him?"

"Mr. Donaldson, the same as I did."

"What in the world can we christen our friend, Ord?" I asked.

"Well, the name Donaldson being established in a way to be upheld by law, I don't think the other matters much."

"Still, it should be fitting."

Ordway snorted.

"Christian names are so fitting, as a rule. You, for instance, are about as far removed from a Homer as a bootjack is from a wheelbarrow. I am John because my father was John, and his father was John. Nine out of ten of my friends call me Jack when they don't call me a fool. I knew a fellow whose first name was Florence, and he spent half his time locked up for fighting, getting drunk, and other little effeminate attributes. Where, on the other hand, you remember Jim Granes, who loved to work cardboard mottoes and book-marks. Names don't amount to much. A rose with—"

"There's a fire-ax handy. Don't get my goat too big. Suppose we give him his choice. He has books, and Donaldson taught him to read."

"Good idea. Say, Donaldson—remember, your name is Donaldson—you've learned to read."

"I've read all the books that came ashore from the Voluna till there is nothing left."

"Well, of all the characters—the male—the man-folks—you have read about, which one had a name you like—that you think would fit you?"

"Robinson," replied the islander promptly.

"Rob—inson?" repeated Ordway slowly. "Where the—Robinson Donaldson. Too much 'son' about that. But why do you choose Robinson?"

"Well, am I not? Didn't he live on an island all alone? Only he had goats and things I never had here, and a black man. What does a black man look like?"

"Great Scott!" howled Ordway. "He means *Robinson Crusoe*."



"Yes, that's it — *Robinson Crusoe*. I read about him twenty times till the book came all apart."

"Well, the idea is good, even if the two names don't fit together like cogs in two well-mated wheels," I said. "What's the matter with switching it? How does Crusoe Donaldson strike you?"

"*Bang!* You have hit the bull's-eye. Son, you are from this moment Crusoe Donaldson, and don't let anybody bluff you out of it."

This important matter being settled to our satisfaction, and bringing no objection from the islander, we proceeded to heat water for shaving. Ordway looked like a tramp, and I like a mangy ape.

In the suit-case we had taken from the Northbird were shaving utensils, and Crusoe stood watching us with a curious expression in his eyes as we lathered our faces and scraped away the hair with safety-razors.

"Why do you do that?" he asked finally. "Don't you like your faces?"

Ordway roared.

"I like mine well enough," he answered, "but Dagwell's would make a sick woodchuck sneak into a hollow log and die. Didn't Mr. Donaldson shave?"

"You mean cut the hair off his face? No. He had hair way—long like this."

He placed his thumb against his chest.

"And the boatswain?"

"He had much hair on his face."

"And you have none."

"Mr. Donaldson told me I would have when I grew to be a man. When will that be?"

If Ordway had had the ordinary kind of razor he would have committed accidental hari-kari right there.

"Well, Crusoe, old chap, if you grow to be any more of a man than you are now, never get angry at me. I can't climb a tree fast enough. Use Dagwell for a football all you like."

"But Mr. Donaldson said I was only a boy."

"That was fourteen years ago. You are a man now."

Donaldson, as I shall call him now, since he 'was really entitled to the name, went silently about the dinner business. He was quick, sure, and long living alone had brought about in him a precision of thought that amazed me. He knew just what to do, when to do it, and all his movements had a definite aim which was always reached.

I speculated still more on the effect of civilization on this man upon whom we had chanced so miraculously.

If we escaped from the confines of the island, certainly he would accompany us. What, I asked myself, were Ordway and I about to do? Give to the world a man of power, genius—a man to lead men and overcome obstacles—or were we going to spoil a god?

Ordway and I had done our shaving outside the cave, having found shelves for our mirrors. Ordway had a round glass we had torn from a door in the Northbird, and I a broken piece from the sliding front of the gun-closet.

The odor of roasting goose came out to us, and Ordway smacked his lips.

"Say," he spluttered through the lather, "if Crusoe can't do anything else, we'll get him a job as chef at the Waldorf."

"Not that Crusoe in there," I replied, also latherwise. "That chap is born for great things."

We enjoyed that meal as well as the first. With his crude implements he was a master. He gave us boiled berries, potatoes roasted in clay, so that when the baked ball of clay was cracked the white, mealy potato came out steaming. Oh, it was no hardship we were up against on the island of Orsgov!

And this very fact had a peculiar effect on Ordway. He was by nature jolly and fun-loving. The experience on the ice had been the nearest to tragedy he had ever been through, and the later weeks had rendered him morose, impossible. And now the reaction made him ridiculous.

"Say, Dag," he began, as soon as our shaving was finished, "I've got an idea."

"Hang on to it. You don't get enough to waste any."

"No, but really. You know how my sister hunts lions. The drawing-room kind I mean. What's the matter with giving that addleheaded crowd of hers a sensation? Why, all New York—I mean her New York—would dance a jig."

"Don't stumble on it, but step lightly. What is it?"

"We'll introduce Crusoe as the King of Orsgov."

"But nobody will know where Orsgov is."

"Good Lord! You wouldn't expect that bunch to *know* anything. Do they know where Sulu is? Did they know where Lilly Cane Annie held forth before the revolution in Honolulu? Nix! The knowledge of foreign parts common to the grizzled veterans of the velvet carpet and polished dancing-floor is limited to the fact that Paris is in France and the British empire the suburbs of London. It's a great idea."

"Rubbish!"

"Dinner is ready," said Donaldson, coming to the door of the cave.

There was a peculiar change in the fellow's manner when we sat down on the benches. He seemed in some way abashed. I feared he had overheard the nonsense of Ordway and was offended. But it came out thus:

"As you said, sir," he spoke, looking at me, "Mr. Donaldson taught me to read, and I read all the books. He told me there were many books in the world, more than I could ever read. But I've read about men and women. You say I am now a man. What does a woman look like?"

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SIGHT IN THE HEAVENS.

ORDWAY nearly jabbed his fork in his eye. We had brought such things

as knives and forks and plates to the table, and explained their use to Donaldson. He was clumsy with their use at first, but no more so than Ordway when Crusoe's question was fired at me.

"Why—" I was stuck for an answer. "A woman is a gentle, tender, loving person, the care of whom devolves on the man who marries her."

"Wait till he gets up against the suffragette crowd. Then tell him that," said Ordway.

I gave him a withering look.

"You have a picture of Queen Victoria," I added to Donaldson, "for you knew how she sat in a chair. Now, Queen Victoria was a woman of all women. That is how a woman looks. There are all kinds of women just as there are all kinds of men."

He was puzzled, but the impassivity of his face did not change. He kept on practising with his knife and fork, becoming decently expert in the one meal.

The next lesson he received was in the use of firearms. We waited a day or two, watching the rocks on the north, for something to shoot at. It would teach him nothing to make a noise, or even to fire at a target. We needed something to show the deadliness of a bullet.

The opportunity came. One day we were all three prowling along the northern shore, and on a distant point of rock stood a great eagle.

"Watch that eagle, Donaldson," I said, and pulled the trigger.

He stood spellbound.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"We'll go and see."

We found the big bird killed.

"But nothing flew."

I then explained the cartridge.

In three days that islander could shoot almost as well as Ordway, and he was a dead shot. Donaldson's nerve was steady as an adamant rock. His eye was clear, his sight superb.

There was never so apt a student. Perhaps because there was never a student so desirous of learning.

But the novelty of this island life was beginning to wear off. Ordway, who had expressed a liking for it, was now consumed with a feverish desire to get back to civilization with Donaldson. He foresaw great experiments in the line of introductions to parlor manners and crowds of people.

For myself I felt more fear than desire, but I knew it had to be done.

Gradually we got our furniture together, and lived in comfort. We killed enough blubber seal for oil for our stove, and cooked on that. The climate of the island was not extremely cold, and we had no discomfort on that score. We had plenty to eat.

But the problem of getting away was still unsolved. The catamaran Donaldson had would do well enough for short trips around the island, but it was not the thing to start off on to find the mainland. We could only judge from the log how this was, and direction would be largely a matter of chance with anything we might build.

The only way we had of fastening planks together was with wooden pins, and though this might have done for the Vikings of old, we were no Vikings.

We had the two axes from the Northbird, and kept felling trees, and lopping them into logs, and hewing them into planks.

I have read many a tale where men were marooned on an island and constructed boats with no more than we had to work with, and put to sea in them. Now I look upon those tales as doubtful.

It is no easy task for an amateur to build a big boat with all the facilities a shop can give. With nothing but fire-axes, no screws, no augur, no nails, no saw, no brace and bit, no chisel, no steam-box or other method of bending the planks, the building of a boat is some proposition.

Days passed, and weeks passed, and we were no nearer being the proprietors of a seagoing craft than a pile of rough-hewn planks in waiting.

But the exercise did us good. We grew hardy, our appetites increased, and we gained in weight.

Our larder was never empty. We had changes of fare enough to keep us in good condition. An occasional bear, plenty of wild fowl, a seal now and again, and fish. Then berries and potatoes gave us sufficient vegetable-eating.

We had gone over most of the island. The soil seemed excellent.

"This," said Ordway, one day when we were out after a species of grouse we found among the birches, "is a domain. If it belongs to nobody, I'm going to try to have the title vested in Donaldson. It is his by right of residence twenty-four years."

"I think we can manage that," I answered.

"Then he *will* be king of Orsgov," grunted Ordway. "You laughed at the idea."

"Let that wait till we are off the place. And to tell you the truth, I don't see much hope. A raft big enough to brave the seas would be too unwieldy. We couldn't manage it, and we would go through just what we did before. We'd get in the clutches of that confounded Gulf Stream, and land on another iceberg."

"Mr. Dagwell," said Ordway solemnly, punching me on the shoulder, "take this from me, and take it straight: John Josephus Ordway doesn't put to sea on any raft if he dies right here. Nix. I have done all the *frappé* stunts I'm going to do. If we can't build a boat, we'll wait for a boat somebody else built. Savvy?"

It was discouraging; but, being in no danger, there was no use moping about it. And we couldn't construct a safe boat—of that I was sure.

"Do you know anything about telegraphy?" I asked Ordway.

"Nary thing. My education in telegraphing is to write a message on a yellowish-looking blank and let somebody—George, for instance—do the rest. What's in your crop? Wireless?"

"I did think of it. But it's no use, I guess."

"That's a pretty good guess — for you."

We bagged a few grouse and returned to the cave. Donaldson had practically deserted his cabin. It was not large enough for three, and he preferred to be with us in the cave.

While we were still chopping down trees, with no particular idea what we were going to do with them, a terrific storm set in from the southeast. The wind was terrific. The snow and rain and sleet divided honors in making everything miserable. Not a living thing showed itself, and we finally took to the cave, and spent the time huddled in furs.

The storm lasted two days, and ended as suddenly as it began. The noon-day sun came out bright and warm. Birds, ahungry after their fast, made their voices heard in the forests. We crawled out of our cocoons and breathed the fresh, crisp, invigorating air.

We all three walked toward the shore to look for a sail. There was no sail. Suddenly Ordway clutched my shoulder and gasped. He did not utter a word, but I saw him staring into the sky.

I looked his way.

There, stumbling through the air, if that is permissible, was a small air-ship.

"Oh!" gasped Ordway. "Oh!"

"What is that thing?" asked the imperturbable Donaldson. "I never saw a bird so big."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE TAIN OF TRAGEDY.

NEITHER the exclamations of Ordway nor the remark of Donaldson surprised me. To tell the truth, I was as much amazed at the appearance of the aerial visitor as either of my companions could be.

It was not only that the thing was

there, but the oddity of construction itself was most surprising.

It was a mongrel breed, made up of the two types, the dirigible balloon and the aeroplane.

The sustaining power was a cigar-shaped bag, with the wings and propeller of an aeroplane. And it was clear enough even to one who knew no more about air-ships than I did that the thing was badly crippled.

What it could be doing in that region I had no idea. I knew that experiments were under way the result of which was to be an attempt to reach the polar regions with an air-ship. But not in so small a contrivance as this.

It was also evident that whoever controlled the thing was making a desperate effort to land on the island. It was coming down fast enough. The only question was, would it last till it reached land.

I leveled my glass.

"Only one passenger," I reported.

"A man?" asked Ordway.

I wondered if he expected the sole passenger in an air-ship in that lonely region to be a woman.

Donaldson stood watching the expression of his eyes alone showing the wonder he felt. His handsome face remained as inscrutable as ever.

This had puzzled me a great deal since our own arrival on the island. It had been my experience that persons who had lived lonely lives expressed their emotions with various facial contortions or grimaces. But in Donaldson's case fourteen years alone had served to suppress all outward exhibition of his feelings.

I wondered, as I looked at him with his gleaming eyes fixed on the wabbling air-ship, now falling almost straight toward the water, what he would be like if he really became enraged at a man. With his strength he would be more formidable than a wild beast.

"He can't make it," said Ordway quickly, and in some excitement. "Oh! He's lost his grip—he's gone!"

We saw the form of the air navigator tumble from his seat and go plunging down some hundred feet to the water.

The surface of the sea was dotted with drifting cakes of ice. I judged from the splash he had escaped striking one of these.

"Get out the raft!" I cried. "The cata—"

Before I had got that far there was a splash. A heavy fur garment lay on the ground beside me, and the skin-clad form of the islander was fifty feet from shore.

Ordway and I lost interest in the air-ship, which shot upward as soon as it was relieved of the navigator's weight. We paid attention only to the swimmer.

And, great Cæsar! how that lonesome islander could swim! He went through the water as easily as a seal. Ice-cakes that Ordway or I would have to swim around he hurled aside as if they were bits of cork.

"Let's get out his fool boat," I suggested. "He may have trouble getting back."

We ran to the little bay, threw off the mooring-ropes, and pushed the catamaran away from shore. Fortunately, we had a breeze that carried us out of the bay and toward the swimmers. The man from the air-ship was sustaining himself in the water, and the islander was shoving among the ice-cakes like a fish.

He did not need our help. He reached the unfortunate air-man, and started back. When we tried to turn his ridiculous craft we were stuck. It would, under our hands, sail in a straight line before the wind, but that was all.

We were of little assistance to Donaldson, but we needed help from him, for we couldn't lay to or stop or come up with the wind, or do anything else with that raft.

But we sailed so close to Donaldson that he caught an outrigger with one hand and was dragged along, holding

the half-frozen and almost helpless air-man with the other.

"Here! Catch him!" he shouted, and the form of the air-man came over the outrigger.

We dragged him on to the platform, and Donaldson was there almost as soon.

He at once took the management of his vessel in his own hands, and Ordway and I looked at each other in a sort of mutual pity at our helplessness as the unwieldy thing swung round slowly and tacked back to her moorings as easily as a yawl on Long Island Sound.

The airman had fainted. We chafed his hands and temples, but the raft was fastened home again before he showed signs of returning consciousness.

"Better take him to the cave and get his clothes off," said Ordway.

There was no reply from Donaldson. He simply picked the man up in his arms and carried him, as though he weighed nothing, into the cavern.

We fairly tore off his clothes, careful to keep him from the heat of the fire, and began rubbing him with bear's grease. We rubbed till our arms ached, and then Donaldson, who had immediately changed to a dry skin suit, took up the work. *His* arms would never tire.

I made a pot of coffee, or what we called coffee; and when at last the fellow showed signs of coming back to earth, I poured some of it down his throat.

The rubbing had warmed his blood and released the tense muscles, so that soon after he was conscious he sat up.

"Where am I?" he asked, looking at each of us in turn with a bewildered expression. "Is this America?"

"No, my friend," I answered; "this is not America. So far as we know, it is the island of Orsgov, somewhere south of the arctic circle, and indefinitely off the coast of Norway. But you are an American. Surely you have not come from the United States in that toy of yours."

He gave a start.

"Where is it? Where is the Alma?"

"Do you mean the air-ship?"

"Yes."

"It went up when you went down."

"She couldn't go far. The storm wrecked her. Where is this? It isn't a house. And you are Americans, too."

"We are Americans, and this is a cave. How do you feel? Any better?"

"Yes, I'm all right—I will be, anyway, in a few minutes. But I don't want to lose my ship. It means a lot to me."

"It would have meant death to you if it hadn't been for Donaldson here."

He looked at the islander, and held out his hand.

"You swam out to save me. How can I thank you?"

"What is that thing you came in?" was Donaldson's reply. "I never saw a bird so big."

The airman now looked puzzled. I saw we should have much explaining to do on both sides.

"It's an air-ship—my own invention," said the airman.

"You say you did not come from the United States," I put in, reverting to my unanswered question; "from where, then?"

"From Paris."

"Were you attempting to reach New York?"

"I was—I was—"

He hesitated, and looked searchingly into Ordway's face and mine. His own, made white by his suffering in the air, seemed to turn an ashen gray. There was terror in his eyes. His lips trembled.

"You are among friends," I said, seizing at once upon the idea that he feared to finish what he had started to say. "Whatever you wish to tell us will not hurt you. Or, if you wish to keep a secret, we have no wish to wrest it from you."

A great sigh, as of relief, burst from

him. His eyes closed and then opened again. He was a handsome, smooth-faced young fellow, scarcely more than a boy. I judged his age to be not more than twenty-two, possibly less.

His lips were mobile, every thought being expressed fully in his countenance. He was a marked contrast to the iron-faced islander.

"I was running away from France," he said.

"Running away from France? In an air-ship? That's a new one on me," I remarked. "Why were you running away from France?"

"To escape arrest—and prison—or death."

I gasped. I heard Ordway breathe hard.

"Arrest—for what?" I could not resist the temptation to ask.

"Murder. I killed a Frenchman day before yesterday in Paris."

His eyes closed again, and Ordway, pale and shaken, gazed into mine with a look that seemed to burn.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE AVIATOR'S AMBITION.

HAVING delivered himself of his astounding statement, the young navigator of the atmosphere fell into a deep sleep.

No wonder. If he had spent two nights and days in the air without sleep, exhausted nature, who cares nothing for confessions nor conscience, might be expected to assert itself.

Ordway and I walked out of the cave together, Donaldson remaining, silently looking down at the pale, upturned face. I turned just at the entrance to the cave and saw him tenderly arranging the furs in which we had wrapped the newcomer.

"Now," said Ordway, when we were clear of the cave, "things do occur in this world that will admit of no explanation. The way of events staggers the most brilliant minds.

Here we have an island and a half-frozen region, where three shipwrecked men have not seen a human face since the wreck of the Voluna twenty-four years ago.

"Two died, having seen not even a sail near enough to signal, and one lived alone for fourteen years without hearing a human voice. We come. Two dodrotted idiots who put to sea in a motor-boat with no provision made for sailing her in case the motor breaks.

"It does break, as might be expected. We float around on icebergs till we land here. And now comes a refugee from France, our own countryman, who says he ran away because he killed a Frenchman. Suddenly old Orsgov, or new Orsgov, springs into being as an island of refuge for the unfortunate.

"The question is—"

"There is no question—not yet, at any rate," I interrupted. "We heard him say that. First, we must realize that, after a freezing experience in the air, he may be suffering from delirium."

"Heaven knows he may," assented Ordway heartily. "Don't I know what it is myself?"

"Second, accepting his bare statement that he killed a Frenchman, we cannot condemn him till we know all the circumstances. There are Frenchmen, and there are Frenchmen. Yet again, there are other Frenchmen. Just as in America, just as in England. I have seen men of all nationalities to kill whom would scarcely be a crime. But an American is at a disadvantage under foreign laws. Let's hunt for the air-ship. What was it he called it?"

"The Alma."

"Queer name for an air-ship, don't you think?"

"Well, it's a name, anyway. First, it's the name of a river in the Crimea, the scene, I believe, of some fighting in the Crimean War. Second, it is a girl's name. Third, you haven't forgotten your *alma mater*."

"All of which doesn't seem to explain the application to an air-ship."

"Why, the chap is young—just at the romantic age—and he has named his craft after some girl. And there the air-ship is."

The balloon-plane, or whatever the type might be called, had fallen about a hundred feet inland, among some beeches, and hung suspended and torn about twenty feet from the ground.

"We can't do anything with it," I said. "Leave it alone. Let him tinker with his own contrivance."

"I hope it isn't badly damaged," observed Ordway. "That craft means much to us."

"It means so much, Ord, and the breaking of it means so much, I dare not think of it. Put it out of your mind. Shed all ideas concerning it. That bag won't carry us a hundred feet. With what could we inflate it?"

Ordway's face became glum. We returned to the cave, and found Donaldson preparing a meal.

"Well, Crusoe," saluted Ordway, "what do you think of your new guest?"

"He sleeps."

"You won't be lonesome any more, it seems."

"Things change."

"I should say so. So you never heard of an air-ship."

"I have a picture. But not like that."

We had looked over his stock of books. They were all pertaining to adventure on the sea, or such stories as "Robinson Crusoe" and "Swiss Family Robinson." To Ordway and me they were old. Some were still read with avidity by the young people, some were not heard of at all at the present time. There were also novels by Charles Reade, Dickens, Jules Verne, Dumas. I recalled seeing an old print, among the illustrations, of an ordinary balloon.

We explained the principle on which modern aeronautics were based, and had an attentive audience.

We let the airman sleep till he woke himself, having put in ten hours' good rest. He felt refreshed, and showed no ill effects of his experience. He was able to sit at the table with us and eat.

His manner was shy, almost fearsome. He would glance furtively from one to the other, but his regard mostly rested on Donaldson.

Wishing to break the barrier that seemed to be building itself around him, I introduced Ordway and myself, and explained about Donaldson and the island, and the manner in which we had come there.

To make all this clear required some time. They were all finished with their meal before I had fairly begun.

"Now," I said, "you know all about us. While I get some grub into me, go ahead and tell us what you care to about yourself. You do not, of course, wish to spend the rest of your life on this island. Your air-ship is in the trees, not far from here, but I fear it is in bad shape."

He sighed, and yet a half smile played around his rather weak mouth.

"Poor old ship," he said. "I little thought it would be used to escape from arrest in. But here goes, gentlemen. I feel that not only am I among my countrymen, but among friends as well.

"My name is Sanderman—Mark Sanderman. I am twenty-three years old. My father died a few years ago, leaving my mother and sister enough to live on and me just a little to start life with. That was as it should be, and I had no doubt of my ability to make my own way in the world. Especially was this so, as I had the backing of a loving—nay, a doting—mother, and a most affectionate sister, Alma."

Ordway and I shot a glance at each other. The name of the air-ship was explained.

"I was from my very youngest days a tinker. I became an inventor, and as a machinist went to work for a man in Paterson, New Jersey, named Joloff. This man, though an American citizen,

had some kind of foreign blood in his veins—I don't know what. But he was capable, shrewd, cruel, and mean. Still, his shops gave me the employment I needed, and did not exact too much of my time.

"We lived in Jersey City, on what they call the Heights, and back of these, on the meadows, I obtained possession of a piece of reclaimed land, and built a little factory of my own. In my hours away from Joloff's shops in Paterson I worked at my own inventions.

"My mind turned to air-ships. Now, you must know, gentlemen, that the building of air-ships is no play for a poor man. But I was confident that I had *the* idea in air-ships. I showed the plans to Joloff, and he proposed to study them, and if he considered it a good investment, to go in with me. He gave me back the plans, and said they would not work out as a commercial success.

"Still I was confident, and my sister told me to go ahead and she would furnish the money. I did go ahead, completed my air-ship secretly, and named it Alma, after my sister.

"As you perhaps know, there is a great international exhibition of air-ships, aeroplanes, all kinds of air craft, going on at Paris now. I shipped the Alma, and my sister and mother accompanied me, for we were sure I had the prize-winner.

"Among the exhibitors was the International Air Navigation Company. There was some mystery about the people who composed this company. When the first day for air-ships, after the aeroplanes had done their flying, had come, it was with the feelings of a conqueror that I got my Alma from the great shed that had been allotted to me and began preparations to soar.

"Imagine my amazement and chagrin when the International Air Navigation Company brought out a bigger air-ship—my own on a larger scale, costing more money than my sister and I could command.



"There was trouble at once, and a French lawyer served an injunction on me to prevent the exhibition of my air-ship as an infringement on the other. I was thunderstruck. I sought advice. The American consul helped me, and I learned that the International Air Navigation Company consisted of Lord Dulmondy and a Frenchman named Nicasse—and Mr. Joloff. They had stolen my plans, and had me tied so that my sister and I were financially ruined."

He paused, and wiped a tear away from his cheek. I heard a muttering from Ordway I had heard before, and knew it was an ominous sound.

Ordway, with his millions—and his influence—was a bad man when he started to growl like a bear.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### THE STORY OF THE FIGHT.

I GULPED down some of the berry beverage to hide my own feelings, and glanced at Donaldson.

That peculiar gentleman was eagerly drinking in every word of the poor fellow's narrative, but his face was like an Indian's. There was, however, a darkening of the expressive eyes, and I knew he understood enough to realize the infamous manner in which the young aeronaut had been tricked.

"Of course," continued Sanderman, when he had regained his composure, "the blow was as severe to my sister as it had been to me. Our money was gone. My mother tried to console us, and said that she still had her share of my father's estate, but it was not to be thought we would touch a penny of that.

"I could not sleep. There, in my hangar, was an air-ship I had spent our money on, which I had worked out myself, planned every inch of, and given, you might say, my life-blood—now useless, good for nothing. For, being cramped for means, I had built my exhibition model small, to carry

but one passenger and the operator, while the rascals who had stolen the product of my brains, with ample means, had built a real air-ship capable of carrying four or five men, with other weight, suitable for military purposes.

"Of course I knew when the time came for the awards I would not even be mentioned.

"Night before last an overwhelming desire came to me to see that rival air-ship at close range. They would not let me get anywhere near it in the open. I knew that men worked in the company's hangar at night. So I went there—it was about eleven o'clock. There were few people around, and they all had their own affairs to attend. Nobody paid any attention to me.

"I had no intention to break into their hangar, but just to look through a window. I did that. Men were moving about with lights, and from what I could see the air-ship was exactly like mine.

"I had just turned away from the window when I came face to face with M. Nicasse, the French corner of the triangular company. He called me a spy and a thief, and I don't know what all. Then he rushed at me.

"I was not armed. I had no pistol, knife, nor any sort of weapon. That will prove that my intentions were not wicked. But M. Nicasse struck me—he struck me twice. He seemed to be beside himself with fury.

"The second time he struck me he knocked me down. He was a heavier man than I, and I am not much of a fighter, anyway. But as I fell, my hand came in contact with a piece of iron. It was part of an iron rod used in some aeroplanes—part of the driving-rod.

"I was maddened by the attack. In the condition my mind was in after discovering the trick that my employer had played on me, it was not wonderful that I lost all sense of—of anything. In blind rage I grasped the

rod and got to my feet. In the semi-darkness I don't think M. Nicasse saw the rod in my hand. Anyway, he called me a dog of an American spy, and came for me again. I struck him on the head with the bar, and he went down like a log. One moan—that was all.

"Then suddenly I came to my senses—or rather, my delirium took a new turn. All I could think of was escape. I knew I would stand no show in a French court. There I was, right close to the company's hangar. M. Nicasse lay on the ground. How could I prove I had not gone there with the purpose in mind to kill him—to waylay him in the dark?

"I was crazy. My mind was in a whirl except on that one point—I must escape.

"I ran to my hangar. My mechanician, or assistant rather, for I did most of my own work, slept in the hangar. I gave him scarcely any explanation, telling him he would know all about it in the morning, but that I must get away at once. He made no delay. We got out the Alma and away I flew.

"I had no clear idea which way to go. I knew if I landed in Belgium I might just as well be in France, and I was afraid of Spain, Italy, and Austria. I put for the open sea.

"Perhaps I had a half-mad idea I could soar across the Atlantic and reach the United States, where I would have some show of protection. Perhaps I thought of keeping in the air till an American-bound ship appeared. I don't know. I can't remember now all that surged through my brain. It was on fire. I had killed a Frenchman on his own ground. That thought seared its way through my brain, leaving little room for anything else.

"I ran into a terrible storm. I could see nothing. I lost control of my airship, and was blown this way and that. A mere aeroplane would have dumped me to the ground or in the sea. I don't know when I was over land or water.

"I was almost frozen. I had no

sense of direction. I had no sleep, and I had no food. It was terrible.

"When the storm cleared away I saw this land. I had no idea what land it was. It didn't look like any part of France I had seen. But I have never traveled any to speak of, and did not know. But the storm had crippled my ship and I could not go on. I tried to make a landing. You saw my finish. You have heard my story. I don't know what will happen to me. I tried my best. I have lost the game. I'm done for."

"Not yet," said Ordway quietly. "You are not alone in the world, Sanderman. I for one believe you."

"And I for two," I added.

"And let me tell you, though we are poor castaways, living on what we can shoot and catch, in this barren land, once back in the world, that grizzly old scoundrel over there and myself are to be reckoned with. Ease your mind. You'll get fair play. I swear it."

I nodded.

"I will kill those people if they come here," added Donaldson, much the same as he might say he was going out to shoot a goose.

Ordway smiled.

"It would hardly do, Crusoe," he said, "to make matters worse by any more killing. In that world our young friend has just left there are laws which govern these matters."

The dark eyes flashed, but the handsome face remained as firm as ever.

"You may have laws in your world," he said. "Here, I am the law. He said so."

"Who said so?"

"Mr. Donaldson."

"But—"

Ordway got no further. I don't know what he intended to say. I don't think he knew himself, really. He got up and walked out of the cave, and I followed.

"Dagwell," he affirmed soberly, "we've got a devil of a question to handle here."

"I know it," was my rejoinder.

The islander followed.

"So—they take what belongs to another man in that world," he said. "Mr. Donaldson called it civilization. We had what he called a dictionary. He used to teach me what all words meant with that book. I remember he said he wanted me to grow up so that when I got to civilization I would know how to act. Darn your civilization."

Ordway and I stood stock still, scarcely breathing. Ordway stared at me, and I stared at Ordway.

It was as if a sealed metallic case containing some liquid explosive had been fermenting for fourteen years and then—burst.

Ordway heaved a great breath out of him.

He turned away and stood looking off to sea.

"Good Heavens, Dag," he moaned, "the tempest has been released!"

Coming toward the island was a French cruiser.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE INSPECTOR OF POLICE.

COLD, icy hands seemed to grip my heart. Was our adventure to end in tragedy? Was there no way to avert what seemed an impending horror?

"We'd better meet them when they land, Dag," said Ordway soberly.

"What is that coming?" asked Donaldson.

"That is a French war-ship after Sanderman," I answered.

There was a glint in the islander's glance. That was all.

"Dagwell and I will meet them if they come ashore," explained Ordway. "We will try to pacify them somehow. At any rate, we shall insist on being taken with Sanderman. You get ready. You will go along. We won't leave you behind."

I darted inside the cave.

"A French cruiser is coming, Sanderman," I said. "Keep your head level. Ordway and I will do what we

can. We will go back to Paris with you, anyway."

I rushed out and joined Ordway. Donaldson stood with folded arms looking off at the approaching cruiser. He wore a white garment he had fashioned from the hide of a great polar bear.

Never in all my life have I seen such a picture as he made as he stood there, every muscle taut; but still not a quiver; not a sound. The terrific power of the man permeated even the atmosphere like a surcharge of electricity.

Ordway and I walked to the farthest point stretching into the sea. We leveled our glasses at the same time. We were never without these except when asleep. Day after day we had looked out to sea hoping to find a vessel—and now one was coming, and its coming filled us with terror rather than joy.

"Perhaps they won't send a landing-party," I suggested.

"You may bet your last dollar they will. Do you see that fellow on the port end of the bridge? His glass is leveled, but not on us. He has spotted the air-ship in the trees."

It was so. The angle at which the officer was gazing would bring the wrecked air-ship directly in his line of vision.

We looked at the cruiser as though we had been hypnotized. We said nothing about our plan of action, or what we would reply to questions. It would be useless to waste words till words meant something.

The cruiser came on, straight as an arrow, and there was no doubt of the intention on the part of her commander to send a party ashore.

We watched her as she swung to. We saw a launch lowered into the water, and men in various uniforms go down the boarding-stairs and get into it.

The launch left the cruiser's side and came straight for us. It chanced that at that spot there was a good landing-place.

As the launch slowed up and slued her bow toward us, we both bent over and grabbed the nose. Three men stepped to land.

One of these, wearing the uniform of a French naval officer, was smiling and courteous, and at first the spokesman. The second to come from the boat was an inspector of the Department of Safety of Paris. The third, grave, stern, dressed in civilian's clothes, was evidently an American.

"Good day, *m'sieurs*," said the French officer, bowing. "This is not such a beautiful country as yours. What is it, may I ask?"

Ordway glanced at me. The officer had spoken in French, and my French was better than Ordway's, and not perfect at that.

"I fancy, sir," I answered, "you know about as much as we do. We are Americans, and reached this place only after a harrowing experience on an iceberg. My companion's name is Ordway; mine Dagwell. Both pretty well known in New York."

"Are you Homer Dagwell and John Ordway, the travelers and hunters?" asked the American in surprise.

"We are those miserable creatures," I replied.

"My name is Collins. I am from the embassy. I suppose you know the trouble. We saw Sanderman's airship, and knew he must be here."

"But you?" I said. "Is it part of the embassy's business to hunt down Americans?"

He smiled.

"I am not engaged in hunting him down. Of course, the French government would scour the earth. I came along to see that he got fair play."

"Good. Then we can negotiate, if that is the proper word, without fear. But we are speaking English, which is impolite."

"Not at all," said the French officer. "M. Ravary and I speak English and understand it."

"We have here," I went on, "little to offer in the way of hospitality. Our

home is a cave, our food what we shoot and catch. Of wines and liquors we have none. We cannot offer you even a cigar."

The French officer laughed.

"It seems to me," he said, "that when our disagreeable task is over, and the hot-headed young American Sanderman, is safely aboard the *Vigilante*, it is for us to offer hospitality. How long have you been in this solitude?"

"Several weeks. And for weeks before that we were drifting around in the Arctic on a field of ice."

"*Mon Dieu!* And you apologize because you cannot offer hospitality. M. Ravary, what do you think of that?"

"I think we are wasting time in a lot of unnecessary talk. I came here not to accept nor dispense hospitality. I came to arrest a murderer."

I took a violent dislike to Mr. Ravary at once, and as strong a liking to the naval officer. But then—a policeman is not trained to be polite, and the officers of the navy are invariably so.

"All in good time, my good friend," said the naval officer. "It would scarcely do to plump ourselves down on two unfortunate men who have been in much trouble themselves and treat them as though they were harboring a criminal."

"What would you have, then?" abruptly asked M. Ravary.

"It would be well," I said, some ruffled myself, "to know with whom we have to deal. If with the captain, we shall get along very well; but if the police force of Paris supposes we can be browbeaten at the start, the *Vigilante* would do well to return to French waters. The flag of the United States is the only flag we recognize here."

The inspector started violently.

"So! How is that?"

"Because it is so."

"But—is this an American territory?"

"So far as we are aware, the American flag is the only flag that ever waved over this island. In the name

of that flag we demand the same treatment, the same manner of negotiation, as though we were in the city of Washington itself."

Ordway looked at me as though he was paralyzed at the monumental nerve of the bluff.

The attaché from the legation looked alarmed.

"I beg your pardon," said the inspector of police, "but I see no flag."

"It is here, unfolded to the breeze."

A look of hope came into the eyes of Collins.

"Where?" he asked.

"Attached to the Alma, the airship in which Sanderman reached the island."

Ordway stared. He had seen the flag the same moment I had. It was a natural thing, of course. An American inventor, exhibiting his air-ship at an international prize meet, would have his flag where it could be seen.

"And does this island, then, belong to no nation, except as you claim it now?" asked the captain.

"So far as we know, sir. There is a young man here who has lived on the island twenty-four years. He was a baby on board a ship named Voluna, which was wrecked in these waters in 1887. He, the boatswain, and a gentleman named Donaldson were the only ones to reach this island. Whether the others were carried to safety in the boats or lost, nobody knows—at least we don't. The boatswain died soon after.

"Mr. Donaldson lived ten years and was drowned. For fourteen years the young man has lived alone. In all that time no boat came near the island. Mr. Donaldson expressed it as his opinion that the island was Orsgov, and, owing to some international discussion, not acknowledged as the territory of any government."

"I think that is true," remarked the captain. "I remember the name Orsgov. I do not recall what the controversy was about. It had nothing to do with France. I believe it was be-

tween Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. But we need not quarrel about the ownership of the island. For my part, our American friends can set up a small republic here. Let us get on in a friendly manner. It is not, as I understand, for the purpose of holding Sanderman back from justice that M. Dagwell takes this stand."

"Justice is justice," I answered. "I want my countryman to have fair play."

"I am here to see to that, and I will," added Collins. And from the look of him I knew he would.

"Come this way," I said.

It was a solemn group that marched slowly toward the entrance to the cave.

We had consumed considerable time talking, and Ordway and I had been a long time watching the Vigilante and the launch.

Before the entrance to the cave squatted the islander plucking a freshly killed goose. He looked up, his eyes somber, his face the same handsome mask as usual.

I introduced the three men from the cruiser.

"This man has lived alone fourteen years," I explained. "He has no idea of his own identity. For simplicity of communication we gave him the name of Mr. Donaldson, his companion in exile for ten years, who has left papers formally adopting him. Crusoe, these men have come for Sanderman. This gentleman, Mr. Collins, assures us that he will see fair play. He is an American, an attaché of the American embassy at Paris."

"I am pleased to meet another American," said the islander, "and the others."

He removed himself and the goose he was plucking from in front of the cave. This surprised me, for I was trembling with fear lest there be a scene.

The Frenchman, and Collins, too, for that matter, stared at Donaldson as he walked away, and I heard the French officer say:

"*Mon Dieu*, what a man!"

I entered the cave. I called Sanderman. I searched every cavern, every nook and cranny.

There was no Sanderman to be found.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### A PUZZLING SITUATION.

I SANK on one of the benches in the cavern used as a dining-room, and held my head, which was swimming.

I could see all kinds of trouble looming up before us, black as an African night.

Of course I knew that the islander had spirited Sanderman away while Ordway and I had been talking with the three officials on the shore.

And what persuasive arguments could be brought to bear on the man we had named Crusoe Donaldson, to compel him to produce the young aeronaut?

Ordway and I were castaways on the island, subsisting, practically, on Donaldson's bounty, for there was little doubt in my own mind of his authority as the sole inhabitant. In no sense of the word were Ordway and I residents of the place. What could we do?

I walked, or, rather, I should say, staggered outside. Ordway, who had been as agitated as myself over the outlook, and who knew the moods that showed themselves in my countenance, started forward as soon as he saw me emerge.

"What's the matter, Dag?" he asked anxiously.

"He—he isn't there," I managed to gasp.

"What! Gone?"

"Evaporated—flew the coop."

"Heavens, what next?" groaned Ordway.

Collins, the attaché of the embassy, was the first of the three official visitors to grasp the meaning of this dialogue.

"What is the trouble?" he asked,

as anxiously as Ordway had spoken. "Sanderman missing?"

"Yes," I replied. "When we went to the shore to meet you at landing we left him inside."

"What is this?" brusquely demanded Inspector Ravary. "Our bird has flown?"

This question stung me into action. Without speaking a word in reply I darted away and ran to where Ordway and I had seen the wrecked air-ship in the trees. It was still there. I hurried back to the expectant group.

"Truly," said the inspector of the Department of Safety, "Americans are strange beings. I ask you a question, and you run away as though I had aimed a pistol at your head."

"I ran, inspector, because the manner in which you asked the question put a question in my own mind. I ran to see if Sanderman had actually flown."

"And—well?" this from Captain Delatouche, which we had learned was the naval officer's name.

"The air-ship is still there. It will never fly till a good deal of doctoring is done."

"Let me understand this fully," said Inspector Ravary, and his manner was rapidly becoming ugly. "You say you left the murderer in the cave."

"I said we left Sanderman in the cave. In our country we don't call a man a murderer until it is proven he committed murder."

"We will not quibble over terms. Where is he now?"

"He is somewhere on this island. That much is certain, and you know as much about the matter as we do."

"I am not so sure about that," replied Ravary. "He is your countryman. I have had dealings with American rogues before. One will always help another. You—"

Ordway stepped forward and laid his hand on Ravary's shoulder.

"This is not the prefecture de police of Paris. Another word like that and I will knock you down. My friend

is trying to give you what assistance he can, and so am I. We are not, however, American rogues. Kindly guard your tongue."

Ravary's eyes blazed with wrath. The good-looking face of Delatouche gave a quick, spasmodic movement and then became calm. It seemed to me that he had almost laughed.

"After all, Ravary," he said, "the man has not left the island. A search here cannot be one-half as difficult as in Paris."

"Oh, in Paris one has efficient help."

"Well, I am sure you will have help now. These gentlemen seem to me to be quite honorable."

"It complicates the whole thing so," added Collins, who was distinctly nervous. "I wish the fellow had not run away."

Delatouche was looking steadfastly at the islander, whose head was slightly bent, as he continued plucking the goose.

Ordway called him. He rose, and with a perfectly inscrutable face, but with volcanic fires burning back of his eyes, he came to us.

"Crusoe," said Ordway, "we are in trouble here. Where is Sanderman?"

"Isn't he in the cave?"

"Now, look here, Crusoe Donaldson," argued Ordway, dropping into a soothing, coaxing tone, "you know well enough he is not in the cave. When Dagwell and I went to meet these gentlemen from the war-ship, we left him in the cave. Where is he now?"

The islander drew himself up to his full height. He was simply splendid. I could have horsewhipped him for complicating the matter, but I certainly could not but admire him. And I saw Delatouche look at him with the same admiration I felt.

"I know nothing about your war-ships," he said. "I have read of them. They are to kill, destroy. I have had books that told that. I care nothing for your war-ships."

"But look here," burst in Collins, who was becoming exasperated. "You have no business to give shelter to a man wanted for a crime. Nobody is going to eat him alive. He will have a fair trial in court, and the representatives of our country will see that he gets fair play. It is not for us to decide a matter like this. Your action is illegal."

The islander looked at him calmly without a reply. I suppose he was hazy as to what "illegal" really meant.

"What do you say, gentlemen—you, M. Dagwell, and you, M. Ordway?" asked Captain Delatouche. "Shall we make a search of the island?"

"It seems the only thing to do," I answered. "I am sorry for young Sanderman; but his story as he told it to us was that he was attacked by Nicasse and he struck him in self-defense."

"Then," put in Ravary, "how was it Nicasse was found near his own hangar?"

"Sanderman explains that. He says he had gone there to look through a window to see if the International Air Navigation Company really had an air-ship exactly like his. As he was turning away, M. Nicasse met him and attacked him. Sanderman stated to us that he was not armed, and by chance found an iron bar, part of a propeller-shaft from an aeroplane, and with that he struck Nicasse down."

"Once was enough, then. But that is his story. Come. We cannot remain here idle. I want my prisoner."

Silence fell upon the entire group. Collins was pale. Ordway vexed. Ravary enraged. Donaldson imperturbable. Of the lot, Delatouche alone seemed to see something amusing in the situation. He was a man of war. This wasn't war. To him it was more like a comic opera.

Ravary's rage overcame his judgment. He stepped close to the islander.

"Unless you produce Sanderman at once," he said, "I will place you in irons and take you to Paris."

The islander folded his arms, looked the inspector squarely in the face, and said without a tremor:

"Try it."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### AN INVITATION TO DINE.

RAVARY didn't try it. He nearly exploded, though, in his wrath. Captain Delatouche placed his gloved hand on the irate inspector's arm.

"Ravary, you only make matters worse," he said. "Of course, you know you have no more authority to arrest this man and place him in irons than I have to bombard the place. I can feel for your disappointment, but it is a ridiculously simple matter to lose your temper over. The man is on the island. He is without food, and therefore will not remain long away."

"No, but this—this authority here—this emperor, king, czar, whatever he is, could get food to him."

"I suppose," continued Delatouche, now speaking to Crusoe, "you would make no objection if we searched the island."

"None," said the islander quietly.

"Not even if I signal for a dozen men to help?"

"Not if you signal for a hundred."

Having said this, Crusoe went back to his job of plucking the goose.

To me, and I suppose also to Ordway, there was something significant in the presence of that unplucked goose. When we had left Sanderman in the cave to go to the shore and meet the launch from the Vigilante, there had been no goose at the cave, nor had we eaten a goose, or seen one, in several days. The bernides and other geese of the north that landed on the island usually did so on the rocky headlands on the north end of the place.

It was clear that while Ordway and I had been watching the Vigilante, and talking on the shore with the landing party, Crusoe had been to the capes at the north end and killed a goose.

It was absolutely impossible even to guess whether he had taken Sanderman with him and hidden him, or Sanderman, taking advantage of the absence of all three of us, had fled to the forest himself. There was no use trying to drag it out of Donaldson then. He had said his say, and that, for the time being, ended it.

But Delatouche, who was beginning to tire of the whole business, quickly acted upon the permission given by Donaldson, and went to the launch, which was in charge of a sailor. He gave some order, none of us hearing it, because nobody accompanied him, and the launch at once started back to the Vigilante.

All this took time, and it was a nervous, anxious group that waited for the arrival of the searching party from the cruiser.

In my visits to many countries I have noticed a peculiar fact.

There seems to be a lack of sympathetic thought and action between the army and navy of a country and the police. I don't know why this is unless it is the delight of the regular police to clap into jail private soldiers or ordinary seamen in uniform they may catch having too loud and boisterous a time while off duty. And this causes trouble for the officers who feel in duty bound to give their fighting men all the benefit of what doubt there may be to their guilt.

I don't know anything about it, really. This is simply a theory that came into my mind when I saw the evident lack of harmony existing between Delatouche and Ravary. But there was the distinction again. One was there to arrest a presumptive murderer. The other was simply acting under instructions to convey the inspector where he wished to go.

If Sanderman escaped into a country where extradition papers would be made necessary, Ravary undoubtedly would be censured. To Delatouche this made no difference. He had nothing to do with crimes on land.



Anyway, after we had fretted ourselves into a stew, a large launch from the Vigilante arrived, and a dozen men, under the command of a midshipman, or some subaltern, marched to the spot where Delatouche stood waiting. I was alarmed, for each one carried a short carbine, or whatever arm the marines of the French navy bear. It was a new gun to me, but any gun, under the circumstances, looked ominous.

"Place all the arms you may have here before me," said Delatouche quietly.

As the men from the Vigilante obeyed, my heart went out to their commander. It needed no American from the embassy to see that Sander-man received fair play. The naval officer was surety enough for that. And I believe that if Ravary had himself come alone and made the capture, Sanderman would have been treated with fairness. But we are not criticizing methods. We are telling the story of Orsgov and its strange inhabitant.

"Now," continued the captain, "somewhere in the forest on this island there is a man hiding. Find him. You cannot make a mistake, for there is but one man, beside those you see here, on the place. Seize him and bring him here. Under no circumstances harm him. I shall hold those bringing him in to an absolute accountability for the security and safety of his person."

The men saluted, and, under the command of their immediate officer, separated, and the search was on.

"Captain," I said, "let me, in behalf of myself and my countrymen here, thank you for your fairness in this unfortunate matter."

"It is certainly unfortunate," he replied. "I need no thanks. I have heard of no harshness between our countries. We will bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. I regret the whole thing."

"*Mon Dieu!!* Don't I?" sputtered Ravary. "Is it any pleasure, do you think, to be ordered to follow an air-ship to the North Pole to get a man who

knocked down another in a fight? The devil fly away with all the air-ships. I have had no sleep since the things reached Paris."

No wonder, then, the inspector was inclined to be churlish. I fancy I would have been so myself under the same conditions.

"How large an island is this?" asked the captain, looking at his watch.

"About ten miles by four," I answered.

"Mostly forest?"

"Well, forest and sparse woodland. Rocks and hills and valleys and streams."

"Then the searching party will be a long time. Permit me to request the pleasure of your company—the three of you—on board the Vigilante for dinner."

"We are scarcely clothed for—"

"Oh, in your case, if you had no clothes. Come along. After what you have been through, a decent meal should be welcome. And our friend here, who never really had a civilized dinner, I fancy will enjoy it."

"We accept your hospitality, captain," said Ordway. "Come along, Crusoe; we dine on board the Vigilante as the captain's guests."

The islander looked up, and then he stood up.

"I am an ignorant islander," he said.

"The ship will be too fine for me."

"Forget all that," the captain told him. "Listen to me. You have lived all your life on this island. How you have retained your reason, how you have remembered the English language taught you years ago, is beyond my understanding. But, of course, now the opportunity has come to you to leave this solitude and become a factor in the great world, you will not neglect it."

"Do not be angry with me when I say you will find many things of which you are ignorant. The world of society is not a merciful world. The reason of a man's ignorance of its niceties does not appeal to the multi-

tude. You will be laughed at and ridiculed. Would it not be better to make your first appearance in public on board a war-ship, among its officers, where all are gentlemen, and where you will be accorded that treatment that one gentleman receives from another?"

"Great!" I ejaculated. "Captain, I thank you again for the generous thought. Come along, Crusoe. Leave that goose for another time."

And so, half unwilling, but with his eyes shining with eagerness, the islander accompanied us to the launch.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### MORE TROUBLE IMPENDING.

How shall I, with the feeble vocabulary at my command, describe the reception of Crusoe Donaldson on board the *Vigilante*, and the dinner that followed?

It is easy enough to tell of the killing of a wild goose. Everybody knows what a goose looks like alive or dead, and the way to kill one is—to kill it.

It is also an easy matter to write a short description of a powerful man killing a bear with his hands. Anybody knows if the man has the muscular power, it can be done.

But to introduce before readers in language that will give a befitting portrayal of the first meeting of a man twenty-four years of age with the elegance and luxury that surrounds the officers of a French battle-ship, is quite another matter. It is practically impossible to paint the picture to do the subject justice. A painted rainbow seldom looks like a rainbow. My description of the experience of the islander will, I know, be woefully inadequate.

Probably the calmest of the lot was the islander himself. Yet from the moment he stepped from the boarding companion to the deck, and saw the line-up of officers to receive Captain Delatouche and his guests, the handsome eyes showed an eager curiosity.

And this curiosity was not limited to Donaldson. It was mutual. Clad in a white fur that a society woman in New York would pay a fortune to possess, his tall, commanding figure attracted the attention of every man who saw him.

I feared he would be so abashed that his manner would be clumsy, or even objectionable. It was neither. Of course, he knew nothing of those polite inclinations of the head, the delicate handclasp, the acknowledgment of the introductions.

But he made no bad breaks. When all were on board, the captain, relaxing the discipline of a French cruiser, introduced Donaldson, giving a short history of his lonely life on Orsgov.

As the men stepped forward one by one to greet him, the lonely islander received them as might a king receive noble visitors from a distant country. His dignity was magnificent.

He spoke little. Then, when he did have something to say, he said it slowly, studying his words well, and the training of Mr. Donaldson, not used for fourteen years, rushed to his assistance like a flood.

Ordway and I were commonplace. Nobody paid any attention particularly to us. The feeble, unimportant fact that we had spent weeks, some of them in almost a starving and raving condition on an iceberg, amounted to nothing. Yet, so rejoiced were we that our protégé was making so excellent an impression, we forgot ourselves.

One thing I noticed in particular, and this spoke well for the fact that Mr. Donaldson had not confined his teaching to reading and writing, but included deportment, probably foreseeing some such occasion as this. This was that Donaldson, no matter how curiosity might be consuming him, never let his eyes rove from the person who was addressing him.

All these greetings took some time. Among those who shook hands with the islander was an officer of marines. He was a very large and finely built

man, well-appearing in his well-fitting uniform. When the greeting was over, I saw this officer step up to Delatouche, salute, and say something in a low voice. The captain turned to us.

"The lieutenant wishes to borrow your friend for about ten minutes."

"Borrow him?" I repeated.

"He will not be harmed, I assure you. I second the lieutenant's request."

Ordway and I consented, and Ordway whispered to me: "It's clothes, I'll bet a peanut."

We were easily occupied on deck for the short time they were gone. Delatouche had sent an order below, and I heard him invite the officers to dinner.

I knew nothing about the distinctions of rank on board a French ship. In fact, I had never been on one before. I would not be afraid to wager a large amount that, in the matter of curiosity, Donaldson acquitted himself quite as well as Ordway or myself.

"Ha!" I heard the captain utter, and turned.

Two men were coming toward us. One was the lieutenant of marines and the other—the handsomest man I had ever seen, and one of the best dressed.

"Good Heavens!" stammered Ordway. "Is that—*can* that be Crusoe?"

It was, but what a different Crusoe. The lieutenant must have just expended a fair portion of his pay in a new shore outfit, for certainly the clothes Crusoe had on had never been worn.

His steady, almost stately tread, as he came toward us, might well be copied as an example of matchless grace, the perfection of muscular power controlled by a coordinating will. No shambling wretch whose solitary life had lost to him the outward evidences of supreme manhood. No gibbering weakling whose first plunge into polite society made him a target for laughing criticism. A king among men, he stood surrounded by scholarly officers, all of whom met him as one gentleman meets another.

In good time the group separated,

for, after all, there were duties to perform, and, under the guidance of two young officers, the islander was taken over the cruiser. He examined everything and listened attentively to the explanations.

Then we were called to dinner.

The man who had never seen a piece of silver as big as a dime sat down to a dinner placed before him on a silver service. His eyes were filled with a peculiar fire. His face now was slightly flushed with the excitement he was striving not to show.

Never have I seen such a face. On a woman it would have been called beautiful. But I am a practical, hard-headed man. I can't call beautiful a face that has every evidence of strength and manhood, virile, and, I knew, if the spirit within was roused, brutal.

I thanked our stars that Ordway and I had saved the knives and forks and spoons of the Northbird and taught him how to use them.

There were, as was to be expected, many table essentials he knew nothing about. But Ordway and I had lived so much in the wilds in various parts of the world that we knew as little as he did.

It was a merry board. Time and time again some officer, the stern etiquette being lifted, would shoot a question at Donaldson concerning the life he had led. He answered always in his quiet way, with no attempt to make a hero of himself. To him all that had passed was natural, because he knew nothing else.

Delatouche had placed me at Donaldson's side, probably thinking my presence so near would give him confidence. He turned to me suddenly.

"I feel strange in these clothes. Do I act like other men?"

"You are superb."

"But that woolen stuff—those clothes next to my skin—they tickle."

"How do you know what a tickle is?"

"Well, it felt funny, and I spoke to the one who gave them to me. He

laughed and said they would tickle me till I got accustomed to them."

"But that man speaks French!"

"So do I," said our lonely islander quietly. "Mr. Donaldson taught me."

I began to feel my own littleness.

"What else did he teach you?"

"Only English and French; but the boatswain taught me his language and some German."

A linguist! We had been with him for weeks and had not discovered this. But we had used only English in speaking to him. He certainly was a marvelous proposition.

When coffee was served, he turned to me again.

"This is better than ours."

I laughed, and the captain shot an interrogative look sidewise at me. Donaldson was at his right.

"Donaldson says your coffee is better than his," I said. "On the island there is a berry which, when dried and roasted, serves as a substitute."

"He has, I imagine, never tasted wine."

Here was a poser. Was it wise, I wondered, to let him taste liquor, With his strength, with his natural instincts born of his savage life, where, as he had said, when he wanted a thing he went and got it, what might the result be if alcohol got the better of him, as well it might.

But he was not my guest, nor was I his keeper. He tasted the wine. He noted that we drank ours, and did the same. But he left the second glass half filled.

"You don't like wine?" I asked.

"No."

I was glad of that, though Ordway and I were not temperance advocates. But my head was filled—cramped to the aching point—with the future of this remarkable man.

All through the dinner Inspector Ravary was glum, eating little, but drinking much. This I knew was the result of his long hours without sleep since the beginning of the aeronautic exhibition.

A toast was drunk to the "King of Orsgov."

I could see that Ravary was beginning to grow weary of the affair, and he proved it.

"Well," he said gruffly to Delatouche, "all this is very pretty, but it adds none to the population of the *conciergerie*. I did not come to the Arctic Circle to feast and be merry. Your men must have whipped the forest by now."

A shade of annoyance crossed the face of the commander of the *Vigilante*. He rose. This was the signal, and the dinner party broke up. We followed Delatouche to the deck.

I heard an exclamation from Ordway, who was just ahead of me.

"Dag," he said, almost with sobs in his voice, "it's coming—trouble in bunches and stacks and bales. Orsgov has suddenly risen to international importance, and is now a summer resort. Look—for Heaven's sake, look!"

I looked, and cold chills almost stopped the digestion of my good dinner.

Not very far from the *Vigilante* was a magnificent white steam-yacht flying the Stars and Stripes, and on her bridge were women with glasses leveled at the wrecked air-ship in the trees.

"That's Gordon Morley's *Elvira*," I said.

"Yes, yes, it's the *Elvira*, all right, and Morley always has a gang of pretty girls. Well, it had to come. Better here, perhaps, than in New York."

I wasn't so sure. I felt a dismal longing for the big city on the Hudson. *There* we might control the islander. Here he was supreme.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE ISLANDER OBJECTS.

"You have more visitors," said Delatouche to Donaldson.

The islander was studying the big

yacht with his greedy eyes that were seeing more in fourteen hours than he had seen in twenty-four years.

"Is it another war-ship?" he asked.

"No, it is a pleasure-yacht. It belongs to a rich American named Morley. We left it at Havre when we came away. I wonder what brought him here?"

Inspector Ravary was looking toward the yacht with a glowering expression.

"He was in Paris," he grunted. "I know what brought him here. All Paris knows how we traced the air-ship. Those women on the bridge are Sanderman's mother and sister. Morley has offered his yacht to search for the mur—the young man."

"Well, it was natural they should wish to search," I answered. "But how did you trace the air-ship?"

"Nothing in the world more simple," answered the inspector, with more graciousness than I expected. "As soon as the body of Nicasse was found, we looked for Sanderman, knowing there was bad blood between him and the members of the International Air Navigation Company. We did not find him at his hotel. We then looked for him at his hangar, and found that he had taken flight in his model."

"We thereupon made the wires burn in every direction. We received many replies, but the first one that gave us any encouragement was from Calais. That city reported an air-ship showing no lights passing over to the Channel. We wired Dover then, and Dover reported an air-ship high above the city, turning north. We kept on, till we learned that an air-ship going fast had passed out over the North Sea."

"Then came a lull during that storm, and we considered it very probable—almost certain, in fact—that the air-ship had come to grief, and if we found the man at all we'd find him dead."

"But no. The fellow was preserved for justice. We heard from Christiana that an air-ship, flying low, had

been seen evidently disabled and beyond control, had been swept in from the North Sea, and had been carried out again. Next we heard from the British station on the Shetlands that an air-ship had passed far to the north. Then we started. Of course, all the information we had received was public property, and others have followed the same clues. Lucky I got here first."

I was not sure just how lucky this was going to prove, and made no reply. We were in the launch of the *Vigilante*, and the launch from the *Elvira* was behind us. There was a puzzled look on the countenance of Delatouche.

"Do you expect complications?" I asked.

"No, not precisely that. M. Morley and I are friends. I wish he had not brought the women. That's all."

He gave a comprehensive and at the same time an apprehensive glance toward Ravary. I knew what was in his mind. He feared a scene. So did I.

We landed first, and the *Vigilante's* launch drew out of the way to afford the other the best landing-place. The first person to step ashore was Gordon Morley himself. Morley was one of the finest examples of the American gentleman sportsman. He was about fifty-five years of age, and his splendid yacht and the flag it flew was known in almost every harbor of the world.

He was a short, well-knit man, and looked well in his yachting rig. He held out his hand at once to Delatouche.

"I learned that you had come this way," he said. "Mrs. Sanderman and Miss Sanderman were so anxious—so eager—to know that the boy was safe that I offered to bring them. How are you, Dagwell, and you, Ordway? Quite a surprise to find you here. Suppose you came on the *Vigilante*, of course. Permit me to introduce you all to Mrs. Sanderman and Miss Sanderman."

When we had clutched ourselves and held ourselves together long enough to acknowledge the introductions decent-

ly, Ordway looked at me, and I looked at Ordway. Then we both looked at Donaldson. He was devouring Alma Sanderman with his hungry eyes, as a tiger might gaze at a gazelle he wanted for dinner.

Ordway looked as though he was going to be ill. I felt it.

Alma Sanderman was the same kind for a woman the islander was for a man. When Delatouche, with that masterful politeness of his, presented him as Crusoe Donaldson, the sole inhabitant of the island of Orsgov, Miss Sanderman looked straight into those hungry eyes, and a slight flush burned up on her cheeks, immediately leaving them like chalk.

"Then, sir," she said, "we must look to you for information concerning my brother. We saw his air-ship, the Alma, which was named after me, and so feel assured he has reached your island alive. Is it not so?"

For the first time since we had spotted him clawing the jaws of a bear apart, Crusoe Donaldson's face showed that it was made of ordinary muscles and not iron. He *smiled*.

Have you ever—you have, of course—seen the bright, glad sun burst through a cloud which had promised a storm? You have felt the immediate change—the effect of the sudden light, the warmth, the beauty.

That was Donaldson's smile.

He had seen a woman and knew how a woman looked.

"He arrived alive, Miss Sanderman," he said quietly.

"And—is he quite safe? Is he well?"

"He was—when I—when we saw him last."

"Is he not here now, then?" she asked in quick alarm.

"The men from the war-ship are searching for him."

"Oh!"

She looked at Delatouche and then at Ravary. She evidently knew the latter's official position, for an expression of terror came over her face.

"I did not realize," she murmured. "Of course you are from the police to arrest my brother."

"It is my duty, *mademoiselle*."

The mother clasped her hands to her bosom and seemed about to faint. But there were more to come from the launch. At least one, and his face seemed to indicate a peevishness that he had been neglected so long.

"Ah, you—it is strange—" began Ravary, and then he stared at a stout, florid man who took his place at the side of Miss Sanderman.

"Well, the boy was my employee, and an American. I accompanied his mother and sister to help find him. He is mistaken about the air-ship. That is all."

"Mr. Joloff," said Miss Sanderman by way of introduction.

There still sat in the launch a tall, spare man, with a long, light brown mustache. He seemed utterly bored by the entire proceeding, and slowly lighted a cigarette.

"Ain't you comin' ashore, Dulmondy?" asked Joloff.

"Oh, get Sanderman and let us return to the yacht. This is beastly cold, you know."

So here were the mother and sister of the airman in company with the American and English corners of the triangle that had robbed him. It was, altogether, the queerest mess I had ever been mixed up in. No possible conjecture as to how the matter would eventually be adjusted could be got at.

"They all wanted to come, so we made a happy family of it," said Gordon Morley. "Better come ashore, Lord Dulmondy. There seems to be a question as to where young Sanderman really is."

"He is hiding somewhere in the forest," explained Inspector Ravary, showing his unqualified disapproval of so much talk, and so many cooks to help spoil his broth. "We'll know when Captain Delatouche gets through his social business and remembers that I am a policeman."

"Certainly. We shall probably find my men at the cave."

The Englishman warped his long body out of the launch, and we all turned to the cave, Joloff walking with Miss Sanderman, Morley escorting Mrs. Sanderman, Donaldson leading the way, and Ordway with me, bringing up the rear.

"Do you see a spot on the horizon, Dag?" Ordway asked in a low tone.

"I see visions, not spots. I see black clouds of war. If Sanderman doesn't give himself up soon, or is not found, I foresee trouble toward both Sundays. On the one hand there will be a fight between Ravary and Donaldson, and, on the other, some sort of trouble between Donaldson and Joloff. Did you see him smile?"

"Did I? And did you see the way she looked into those eyes of his? Dag, when we get back to civilization we'll turn playwrights. This thing is going to be staged."

"Yes, if we don't get killed in the m  le when it comes."

We did not get far on our way to the cave. The men from the Vigilante had evidently noticed the arrival of the launch and were weary of waiting. The subaltern saluted his commander.

"Captain, we have searched every foot of the island. We have found nobody."

We stood aghast.

"He is there!" bawled Ravary, now beside himself with rage. "He must be there!"

"We did not find him, sir," said the officer coldly.

"He is in that forest. I'll have him out. I'll burn him out. I'll set fire to the forest, and then he'll have to come out."

Into the eyes of the islander came that same ominous dark fire, sending, it seemed, flashes of deadly hate from the pupil.

"You—a French policeman—will burn my forest?" he said slowly.

"Yes, I will burn every tree. I'll have my prisoner."

Then that face that had baffled Ordway and me so many weeks writhed in a tortured rage the man had never felt before in his life. I felt a cold grip holding me. I could no more have spoken than if I was born without a tongue.

"You! You will burn my forest! You will burn a man!"

The islander leaped forward. Joloff stood in his way and went over like a ninepin. Alma Sanderman screamed. Mrs. Sanderman fainted. Collins, who had had nothing to say, seemed stunned.

The islander grabbed the inspector with both hands. The inspector cursed and tried to get out his pistol. He was lifted high in the air above Donaldson's head. The islander leaped toward the shore.

There was a startled cry from Delatouche, and a scream from Ravary.

The next instant the latter had been hurled like an empty bottle twenty-five feet out into the chilling sea.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"I RULE HERE!"

EVERY man from the Vigilante followed the young officer into the water after Inspector Ravary. There was a great shouting and splashing, curses from Ravary, who, though he was, I knew, an excellent inspector of police, was a mighty poor swimmer. He floundered among the floating cakes of ice, and, without assistance, would assuredly have drowned.

The first man to move, aside from the Vigilante's crew, was Gordon Morley. He stepped quickly to my side.

"There is a mystery here I don't understand, Dagwell," he said. "I know, of course, that Mark Sanderman struck Nicasse with an iron rod, and came here in his air-ship, and is hiding from the French police. But who is this tiger of the island? He dresses like a gentleman, and calls the forest *his*. I know nothing about this

island. Yet I have cruised the Norwegian coast and visited the Faroes."

"This fellow," I explained, "is all we know of remaining alive from the wreck of a ship called the Voluna, that went down in these waters in 1887. He was a baby then. He knows nothing of his parentage. He doesn't know what nationality he may claim. And so far as we know the island belongs to no country."

Morley nodded, and bent his head a moment, evidently in deep study.

"The fellow is remarkably intelligent, and his muscular power is uncanny. It is no accident, nor the result of his living here. He has undoubtedly inherited his immense strength. He also has unqualified abilities for making trouble. He is either English or American, I should judge."

"Ordway and I have agreed upon that. However, we have examined the clothing he wore when rescued by the boatswain of the Voluna and a Mr. Donaldson who lived till this chap was ten years old, and in that time gave him a good education. These clothes are neither American nor English in their design. They seem more like the garb of a circus child than anything else."

"He must be protected from himself, and now, I should say, from Ravary. Heavens, but the inspector is wild!"

And so he was wild. I scarcely felt like blaming him for being wild. I, who could live in the water a long time, and swim a long distance, knew what it was to swim among the sharp cakes of ice. And to a man who was not accustomed to swimming the experience must have been anything but pleasant.

Then add to this the personal affront, as he would undoubtedly look upon Donaldson's action, his feelings can be imagined better than I can describe them.

Shivering, and surrounded by men also shivering, he came straight for the island, as soon as his feet were on the land.

"You!" he cried. "You will throw an inspector of police from Paris into the sea!"

As quickly as his rage had flared up within him, and received outward expression, the islander had subsided and become as cool as ever. He waved his hand.

"You and your police of the place you call Paris are nothing to me," he said. "Remember, you are not in your Paris now. I know of Paris only what I was taught when I was young. It is a large city and the capital of France. All France amounts to nothing here. I learned of America, Germany, England. All these are great countries. Some I learned from my teacher, Mr. Donaldson, who was an American, are great in one way. Others are great in other ways. All this is good—in those countries. This is Orsgov, and I rule. You threatened to burn my forest. What would your police of Paris do if I went there and said I would burn your houses?"

"There you are, Ravary," said Captain Delatouche. "That is an argument you cannot refute. If you want to conduct your police business on a basis of equal rights here, well and good. I'll wait. But the French navy is not here to support you in burning forests. Be calm. You must remember you are dealing with a man who knows nothing of other men. He is primeval in his instincts. You must hold your anger in check."

Ravary swallowed hard, but in a moment his face cleared, and he stepped forward with his hand extended.

"Man of iron," he said, "let us be friends. I forgive you for trying to feed your fish with me. I am cold and wet."

"In the cave is a fire," answered Crusoe. "Go inside and take off your clothes. I will give you furs while your things are drying. Come."

He led the way, and Ravary followed.

"Is there any danger of treachery



on the part of—your man?" asked Gordon Morley.

"I don't think so. That was the first burst of anger we have seen, except a slight one when he damned civilization. I fancy Mr. Donaldson did not teach him that. It sounds more like a boatswain."

"Moreover," put in Ordway, who had with difficulty recovered the use of his tongue, "he is not our man. We have no more to do with his actions than you have. We had laid plans to take him with us, if we ever left this place, and to introduce him into the world. But the whirlwind of events seems to have knocked our quiet plans into a cocked hat. There was no treachery, however. Here comes Ravary."

The inspector reappeared, completely muffled in fur garments.

"That fellow has a fortune in furs," he growled, "and he is liberal. He presents me with these."

Donaldson followed Ravary from the cave.

"Sirs," he said, and making an awkward sort of bow, "and women"—he had forgotten the word ladies, if he ever learned it—"may I have some talk with my two friends alone?"

"Certainly," replied Delatouche.

"But there is no necessity for that, Crusoe," I said quickly. "In some measure you are right, in others wrong. Let's thrash the matter out right here. Of course nobody can compel you to do anything you don't want to do. Nobody has authority over you till we know who you are. But don't let us have any more fighting."

There was a grunt from Joloff. He had picked himself up unhurt, but I could see from his expression that he had taken a violent dislike to the islander.

"It seems to me—" began Morley, then he stopped, and turned to Ordway and me. "Perhaps my intrusion in the matter will be unwelcome."

"Not at all," I hastened to answer. "In fact, of all men I believe you can

straighten this mess out the best. You have traveled in many countries, and you are a lawyer of international repute. Let us hear from you, by all means."

"Why," he continued, "the case as it appeals to me now, stands like this: This island of Orsgov, as you call it, seems, so far as the combined knowledge of us all can show, to belong to no country. Therefore, it appears to me that while the police of the city of Paris have no jurisdiction here, the commander of a French cruiser may, if he so wills, demand the person of Mark Sanderman."

"You see, it will not serve Sanderman to any extent if we decide that this being neutral ground he must be considered in sanctuary, as we might express it. He can't remain here, for you will leave, taking Crusoe Donaldson with you. Sanderman is not accustomed to the wilds, and would starve to death in a month. If he escapes from here, the first country he lands in will turn him over to the French government. The circumstances are such that I feel confident Sanderman will be acquitted."

"A splendid expression of the legal aspect of the case," broke in Lord Dulmondy. "And there is a great deal depending on the presence of young Sanderman. I did not know, when I put my money into the International Air Navigation Company that a controversy over the new style of air-ship would arise. I ask you now, Mr. Joloff, had you ever seen plans drawn by Sanderman of an air-ship similar to and forerunning ours?"

"No, I had not," answered Joloff.

"That," remarked Alma Sanderman quickly, "is a malicious lie."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### AN INTERLUDE OF THE NIGHT.

OH, what a mess! It seemed as though we would never get it straightened out.

Miss Sanderman's eyes flashed fire, much the same as Donaldson's. Her tall, stately figure was as rigid as human muscles could make it. I thrashed about in my mind for something to say that would bring about a calmer spirit, so that we might reach some general and peaceful understanding. But though Orsgov was frequently visited by eagles and other wild birds, the dove of peace had evidently left the place out of its itinerary.

"Let us return to the Vigilante and talk the matter over," said Delatouche.

"We must settle it here," answered Ravary. "On the Vigilante I am nothing."

I nearly laughed. He was so much else on Orsgov.

"I offer the hospitality of the Elvira," put in Gordon Morley.

"I shall not leave the island till I find my brother," declared Alma Sanderman. "It is not that I wish to defeat the ends of justice. I know my brother struck Nicasse in self-defense, if he struck him at all. This has not yet been proven. Please bear that in mind. Everything seems to be conducted on the theory that Mark has already been convicted of murder, when, as a matter of fact, it is not surely known that he had any altercation with M. Nicasse."

"That is a good point—we would be—in the United States," said Collins, of the embassy.

Delatouche waved his hand to the young officer.

"Return to the Vigilante. I will call for a launch when I want one."

"There will be no need, captain," said Morley with a smile. "I shall keep my launch here. I will put you on board. But how about these ladies? Night is coming on. They can't sleep on the ground."

"There is a log-cabin we have not used," I spoke up. "Donaldson had used it summers, but not since we have been here. The ladies are welcome to it. They will be safe."

"Come," said Crusoe. "I will show you."

Mrs. Sanderman, who had been like a woman in a trance all through the excitement, was taking Alma by the arm, and the three set off. Joloff started with Alma. Donaldson turned. He had caught the word "ladies" from hearing it spoken.

"You," he said, "may stay here. I shall take the ladies to the cabin and no one else."

Joloff's face turned purple. He looked as though murder would be a delight to him just then. Secretly I felt like laughing. Ordway gave me a glance, but quickly turned away.

Donaldson soon returned, and between Gordon Morley and Delatouche they managed to produce enough cigars to go round. We stood around idly smoking. The night was upon us, but not a man in the party felt like sleeping.

Suddenly from across the water came the blare of the band of the Vigilante. Crusoe stood as if petrified.

"What is that?" he asked. He had never heard music, of course.

"It's a band," I explained. "It is music. Did Mr. Donaldson ever tell you about music?"

"Yes, but that did not give me any idea what it was. I am—I am—am—"

He paused, and stood with distended eyes, drinking in the strains, softened by coming across the water, and a peculiarly soft expression came into his eyes.

"Music's charm to soothe the savage beast," whispered Ordway.

The islander did not move a muscle nor speak a word as long as the band continued its evening concert. His concentration, his statue-like immobility, got on our nerves till I, for one, thought I must yell.

When it was over his arms fell limp at his side, and his face was white.

"So," he said slowly, and in a low tone, "that is music. The world has something beautiful in it after all. It is not all kill and steal."

The events of the day had made us weary, and I conducted the party to the caverns. Ordway and I made a raid

on Donaldson's stock of skins, to which he offered no objections, and we spread them around in the most convenient places for beds. Even Gordon Morley, with a palatial yacht five minutes away by launch, flattened himself on two bear-skins and went to sleep.

Ordway and I were near the entrance to the cave. I soon fell asleep, the last thing I remember seeing happening to be the huge bulk of the islander as he hove himself down for rest.

It was about midnight when I stirred, restless from the anxiety I had felt, and was still feeling, I at once became conscious of a form moving stealthily among the sleepers. It was too dark in the cave for me to recognize the moving person, but, without raising myself, I looked toward the spot where I had seen the islander lie down.

He wasn't there. Then the moving form drew nearer and I recognized Joloff.

My heart beat faster. What new tragedy was going to thrust itself into our affairs? I did not speak. I waited and watched.

Joloff did not look at anybody till he got to Ordway and me. He paused barely a moment as if to make sure we were asleep. Then he passed on out of the cave.

I rammed Ordway with my elbow.

"S-t!"

The slight sound was enough for him, and quietly we crept to the entrance and outside.

"What is it? What's wrong?" asked Ordway.

"It is for us to prevent anything wrong," I answered in a whisper. "Crusoe is gone, and Joloff just left the cave."

Ordway gave a quick intake of breath.

"To the cabin, then," he said in as low a tone as my own. "Shall we take guns?"

"No. That would look too much as though we expected violence."

We hurried toward the cabin. We

could see the form of Joloff a short distance ahead of us, and Ordway clutched my arm.

"He's got a pistol in his hand!"

I felt the tension of the moment. It was something I had never felt before. It was worse than any sense of danger to myself I had ever experienced.

The broad square form of the islander was at the cabin door. In a moment Alma Sanderman came outside and joined him. He took her by the hand and led her away toward the rocky, indented headlands to the north.

We could not hear a word they said. But we knew he was taking her to see her brother.

Breathless, wordless, almost without our hearts beating, we crept on in the wake of Joloff, who was trailing those two like a wolf.

They, ignorant of what was going on behind them, indifferent to everything that happened except the object of their journey, did not turn. Joloff kept drawing nearer to them, and we kept getting closer to Joloff.

The cold crisp air was vibrating with tragedy. There was no doubt in my own mind that blood would be spilled, or a life destroyed, that night.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE ENCOUNTER.

THOUGH we could not hear a word that was said, we could see that Donaldson and the girl were conversing earnestly. The handsome head of the islander, on which he wore a fur turban, was erect, almost motionless as he strode along, with his strong hand on Alma's arm, helping her over the rough places.

There was a stream about ten feet wide they had to cross, and he made no halt in his progress. He lifted her in his arms as if she were a baby, and splashed through, setting her down dry-shod on the other side.

I rushed forward, as did Ordway, when the pistol in Joloff's right hand

was slightly raised. But it was lowered again, and we resumed our former steady gait.

It was evident that Joloff was determined to follow till he, as well as Alma, knew where Sanderman had been secreted.

As we drew nearer the north shore the forest of birch and beech became thicker, and we could get closer to Joloff without being seen. In some spots the earth was soft and spongy, and we had difficulty in avoiding the noise of the suction as we withdrew our feet at each step.

Joloff was having the same difficulty, but he crept on with the soft stealthiness of a cat stalking her prey.

At last the foremost two stood on a headland jutting northward into the sea, and we saw Donaldson point down toward the water. Ordway leaned toward me and whispered:

"A cave opening from the ocean."

Suddenly we were thrown into consternation. An electric outfit, strong enough to kill, could hardly have made us leap as we did. Donaldson threw aside his fur turban, shaking his massive head, his long, dark hair fluttering in the night light like a lion's mane.

Then the girl stepped close to him, threw her arms around him, and their lips met.

We heard a half suppressed curse from Joloff and the pistol was raised again. But before he had time to fire the islander had disappeared.

Joloff waited, crouching like a wild beast, ready to spring. Ordway and I braced ourselves for whatever might seem best for us to do.

The intensity of Joloff's emotion had made him as oblivious of what was occurring behind him as the other two had been. Ordway and I were so near him now that with one leap we could seize him.

We had but a moment to wait. The shaggy, soaked head of the islander appeared, and immediately following him was Sanderman.

When the airman stood on the head-

land the girl, regardless of the dripping condition of his clothing, threw herself into his arms, or rather she snatched him into hers, and burst into a terrific fit of sobbing. The young man seemed calm enough, and Donaldson stood with folded arms, looking at the two.

Sanderman was speaking, and we saw him point to Crusoe. The girl instantly released her brother, and, springing to the islander, threw her arms around him again in a rapture of gratitude.

"Now!" came Ordway's voice, and we leaped together.

There had not been the smallest fraction of a second to lose. As we crashed against Joloff, Ordway grabbed him by the throat, and I, seizing his right arm, bent it upward. The pistol, an automatic, began its terrible series of explosions, till, within the period of three seconds nine shots had gone into the air.

The three on the headland turned in their surprise. The girl put her folded hands against her breast. Her brother stood speechless and terrified. The islander came toward us.

It was light enough to see his face. It was distorted as it had been when he hurled Ravary into the sea.

Joloff cursed, fought, kicked, and bit. But in a few minutes we had him on the ground and under control.

"He tried to kill us?" said Donaldson interrogatively. "Let me have him."

"No!" I almost yelled. "Go away. Leave him to us."

"Give him to me. He is on my island. I will have him."

"I tell you, Crusoe, leave us alone. He won't do any harm now."

"Curse you!" gurgled from Joloff's throat. "You hide a murderer, and in a few hours you steal my bride!"

"Your bride!" I gasped. "Are you married to this man, Miss Sanderman?"

"I am not," she answered, struggling to be calm. "He has tried to make me so. On board the *Elvira* he

told me if I would marry him he would see that Mark was set free, and make him a partner in the airship company."

"I'll kill the lot of you," howled Joloff with another curse.

He was struggling, and he was a powerful man. But Ordway and I were no weaklings, and we kept him down.

Suddenly a hand of steel gripped me. I was lifted, borne aloft in the air as though I was a stuffed pillow, and slung with a terrible impact against a tree. I was half stunned, but conscious enough to see the islander stoop, pick up Ordway, wrench loose his hold on Joloff, and lift him in the air above his head as he had me.

Ordway landed in a mass of ice and snow and frozen mud, and went slithering about twenty feet before he came to a stop on clean ground.

Then the irresistible tempest of the islander's rage broke entirely loose. With a roar like that of an enraged beast he lifted Joloff from the ground, perfectly helpless in those arms and hands of iron.

He turned till he faced a rock, a bare rock that rose about twelve feet above the ground, presenting a straight front.

Joloff, squirming like a worm on a hook, and uttering frightful curses and cries, was lifted above the islander's head. I shuddered and froze with horror, but my tongue refused to utter a sound. I heard Ordway gurgling and trying to shout, but all the noise he made was like the driveling of an idiot.

One second more and the body of Joloff would be smashed beyond all recognition on the rock, and all hope for the islander would be lost.

I felt that I was fainting. My heart actually ceased to beat for a short space of time. Ordway made a run, slipped on the ooze he had already skated across, and came down on top of me with a grunt.

Sanderman's eyes were wide open with horror, but he was unable to move. His mouth twitched and twisted, but no sound came from his lips.

Then Alma Sanderman jumped to the islander's side. Her right arm went around his neck.

"Don't!" she cried. "Please don't! For my sake, don't!"

The rigid arms relaxed. The squirming form of Joloff was lowered. It hung a moment in the giant's grasp while he looked into the girl's eyes.

"You love him? He is yours."

And Joloff was tossed aside like a cork, landing ten feet away.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A TRUCE.

THE Satanic rage melted from the islander's expression and left it calm, but his burning eyes were fixed on Alma Sanderman's face.

Something like returning life sent the blood surging through my body once more, and the two of us, Ordway and I, got to our feet at the same moment.

In his struggles Joloff had dropped his automatic. I stepped to where it lay on the ground, picked it up, and slipped it into my pocket.

Joloff, gasping, sputtering, and inflamed with a rage for which he could not find adequate expression, slowly got to his feet, slipped on the black ooze, and went down again. Picking himself up he joined the group. He glared at Donaldson with a venom equaled only by that which the islander turned on him.

"What are you, man or devil?" gasped Joloff.

"I am a man," calmly answered Crusoe. "But you—you are a—a—"

He was at a loss for a fitting simile. All the animals and birds he knew were, in their own way, too high in animal nobility for him to liken them to this man who would have shot him.

He could not say he was a bear, for there is nothing ignoble nor nasty about a bear. He certainly could not compare the gasping, yellow-faced would-be murderer to the Arctic eagle. Not

even the vultures he had infrequently seen were low enough to be likened unto this fellow. So he faltered.

Joloff, however, was evidently bent on continuing a quarrel in which he could expect to get only the worst end. Perhaps he hoped to goad Crusoe to some act of violence that would not end his life, but would be so serious that some action in law might deprive Donaldson of his liberty.

"Well, go on, savage," he snarled. "What am I?"

Crusoe had his arms folded, and was looking straight at his tormentor. His eyes glowed with the dark, lurking fires Ordway and I had seen in them a few times.

"Long ago," said the islander, speaking slowly, and distinctly, choosing his words from the deep recesses of a memory which was marvelous, "Mr. Donaldson told me of all the different creatures in the world. Some, he said, were bold and noble. Of these he spoke of the lion, which he said was found in warm countries. And he mentioned a beast called a horse, which men use for drawing wagons. And he spoke of others, living things that were—that were mean, low, he—he had a word—I'll think of it—de—detest—detestable.

"That's the word, detestable. He said that some men were mean and detestable like the crawling things that bite or sting and kill. He said the most detestable was a poisonous snake. That is what you are. A poisonous snake."

"Right!" shouted Sanderman, who had found his nerve and joined the group.

Joloff, with an oath, and a clenched fist, sprang toward the airman. Ordway grabbed him by the collar and hurled him backward.

The eyes of Miss Sanderman restlessly shifted from one to another of us, and her face was white with fear. It seemed an involuntary act when she stepped close to Crusoe's side.

It was time somebody took command.

"Now, see here," I said sternly, thrusting myself forward, "we've got to have an understanding right now.

"For us to say now that Donaldson was wrong in bringing Sanderman here to hide is a waste of time. What he did was done in a spirit of chivalry, not understanding the necessity of having laws, nor the absolutely essential, obedience to those laws for the government of and protection of the majority.

"He knew nothing about the miserable motives that govern the minds of some of the people in the world. His only law has been the law of nature—a law that has thus far been kind to him, in as much as it has brought him food and clothing and kept him from contact with evil men.

"Let that all pass. Sanderman is here, and will return with us. Now you, Joloff, coming from that civilization into which we are about to introduce Donaldson, having the benefit of an education and a knowledge of what one man owes another, are to be remonstrated with. At heart you are a murderer. I don't know whether it was your intention to shoot Donaldson only, or all three. You were bent on slaying of the meanest kind. The man had done you no harm. He had for the moment outwitted the Paris police. That had nothing to do with you."

"Nicasse was my partner."

"You knew, when you saw Sanderman appear, that there was a way—the proper way—of bringing him before a proper tribunal for trial. You chose to shoot. Ordway and I were, thank God, on hand to prevent your insane act from doing harm.

"This affair, as I look at it now, must remain a secret between us five. Had a bullet from your pistol struck anybody it would be different. But we have enough trouble on our hands without grabbing at any we can leave alone. There are five witnesses to your attempt. If there is another one we shall tell what we have seen."

"Let me talk, if you are through your sermon," growled Joloff.

"Proceed."

Joloff took a deep breath.

"You do not know all the circumstances," he began. "Sanderman is, or was, my employee in my mills in Paterson. He did show me the plan of an air-ship, but I scarcely looked at it. I was then negotiating with Nicasse, the French aeronaut, on the question of organizing the International Air Navigation Company. Lord Dulmondy was willing, provided Nicasse could get a wealthy American to make the third. Nicasse had no money, but he had the air-ship. The air-ship we have in the hangar at Paris was not made from my plans, but from Nicasse's, and Nicasse never saw Sanderman's scrawls.

"Lord Dulmondy never saw any plans. He knows nothing about it. So, you see, we were perfectly justified in protecting ourselves. So much for the business end of this mix-up. Now take the—romantic. I have seen Miss Sanderman several times. She has been to the shops in Paterson to visit her brother. I have had occasion a few times to call at her home. I fell in love with her.

"I am rich. As my wife she could have everything that money could buy. I know she does not love me now. But when she begins fully to understand that I am entirely innocent of any wrong intent, she may learn to think something of me.

"As to the attempt to shoot, I was mad—beside myself. But as a reason—not an excuse—let me explain that this has been a terrible strain on my mind. And I thought I was going to lose her."

"You couldn't very well lose what you never had," said Miss Sanderman sharply.

"But what does all this lead to?" asked Ordway. "We don't care about a sniveling yarn of a broken heart. Cut it out and get somewhere."

"I am getting somewhere," continued Joloff. "I am coming to the parting in the road for Mark Sander-

man. One way takes him to freedom and to wealth. The other takes him to French justice and the guillotine or prison for life. It is you,"—he turned to the girl with what he considered a smile—"it is for you, Alma, to make the choice."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE GANTLET.

THE girl's face blanched. She parted her lips as though to reply, then closed them tightly.

"So far," I said to Joloff, "your remarks sound very much like a threat—coercion. But go on. We'll have it out here if it takes till breakfast time. I am glad we are in a latitude where we can see each other the entire twenty-four hours."

"The situation," continued Joloff, "is simply this: Sanderman, you will all agree, is in a bad fix. It is pretty serious to kill a Frenchman in cold blood in France. Nicasse had not wittingly done Mark any wrong. The mere fact that he built the same kind of air-ship amounts to no wrong-doing. It was a coincidence. An unfortunate one, I will admit, but a coincidence just the same.

"There is not a particle of doubt that if Sanderman goes back to Paris with Ravary the inspector's report will be a savage one. His temper is none too good at any time, and, after all his trouble, he will push the case against Sanderman to the limit of his power. And it is not in France as it is with us. Public opinion has not the sway in France. The police and the courts are supreme.

"So far as French minds will look at it, the killing of Nicasse was the wanton act of a disappointed man. Nicasse was on his own ground, where he had a right to be, near his hangar. He was found there. Sanderman flew away in his air-ship, thereby convicting himself.

"This, gentlemen, and Alma, is the

situation you must face if Mark returns to Paris in the custody of Ravary. Now, listen to the other side. See the bright sun shining for us all, the music of the spheres playing—"

"Cut out the dope," came the cold, cruel words of Ordway. "I still hear the music of your automatic. Pump harder. The water is rising in the hold."

Joloff nodded.

"In plain language, then, there is a way out. I am, as I said, rich. So far as I know Nicasse has no near relatives who will insist on pressing the hunt for Sanderman if he does not return to Paris. Money can do in Paris what it can do in any other place, and the memories of French policemen are much like the memories of policemen the world over. They all remember they are advancing in years, and a snug bank-account is a beautiful silver-lining to the dark cloud of incompetent old age.

"My proposition is this. It is simple, and can be carried out without any trouble:

"Sanderman goes back into that cave. Nobody is going to look for him in a cave that opens from the sea. Let Ravary burn the forest if he wants to. The timber is good for nothing except wood-pulp, and there is no mill near enough to make it available for that.

"Let him rave, curse, do anything he wants—then leave him to me. I'll venture to promise that his report will be that Mark was blown from his airship in the storm and drowned at sea.

"Then when it comes time for the cruiser and Morley's yacht to leave, you, Dagwell, and you, Ordway, must have reached a conclusion that our friend here you call Crusoe, is not yet ripe for the inevitable introduction into civilization. You desire a little time in which to coach him. We leave you here.

"Immediately upon my return to Paris I will manage secretly to send a seaworthy yacht after you. The sail-

ing-master will have orders to carry you to any spot on the earth you may choose. Sanderman will accompany you in perfect security, for by that time the police will have—well, forgotten all about the murder of Nicasse. There will also be a large sum of money for Sanderman to begin life anew. What do you think of that for a way out?"

"It isn't a way out yet," I answered. "So far it is a *cul-de-sac*. You have led us up a blind alley to assassinate us. Proceed with the assassination."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. All this sounds very pretty. 'Cinderella' isn't a patch on a barn door compared to it. The *Good Genie* of the 'Arabian Nights' was a low-browed villain compared to you. Come over with the gold beads."

"Of course," added Joloff, "the latter plan is contingent upon Alma becoming my wife as soon as we return to Paris."

Miss Sanderman gasped, turned white, and seemed to shrink up into a small bundle of quivering muscles.

Ordway looked steadily at me, then at Joloff.

"Joloff," he said, "it is not for me, and it is not for Dagwell, to say whether or no Miss Sanderman will consent to your gentlemanly arrangement. Had I the authority I would kick you three times the length of this island."

"But it is none of your business," retorted Joloff. "You and Dagwell are merely witnesses, and this savage doesn't count. The matter seems to be one that only Miss Sanderman herself can settle."

The gleaming, ominous eyes of the islander were sending out their volcanic flames, and I began to fear another attempt on the life of Joloff. I am ready to admit right here that so far as my personal feelings in the matter were concerned I would have shouted with joy if I could have seen Joloff stretched dead, torn and broken, on the rocks. But this would merely make a bad matter worse.



As Joloff had said, it was a question Alma Sanderman could settle, and no one else. It did not even occur to me that the fellow might not keep his promise. I knew he would.

Miss Sanderman looked at the man in whose hands seemed to rest the destiny of the brother she loved so well, and for a moment I thought she was going to faint.

Then, as if taking a firm resolve upon an action, hideous as it might seem, she made two steps toward him, with her hand half outstretched. But before she had reached the fellow, Mark flung himself forward and planted a stinging blow on Joloff's mouth. He reeled backward, tripped over an outcropping root, and fell. Blood streamed from his lips, curses welled from his throat.

"That," said Mark, "is my answer. I will not buy my liberty at the price of my sister's. You are a dirty hound."

A gurgle came from the islander. He still stood with his arms folded, and I knew he was seething with a murderous desire to get his iron grip on the man again. But I waved my hand at him to keep still.

Joloff rose to his feet. He made no attempt to reach Sanderman. He knew the futility of this. He was crestfallen, raving, bleeding.

"Then," he said, and his words were thickly uttered, for his lips were now swelling rapidly, "it is a matter for the police of Paris. We will go back to Ravary."

"Lead on," I put in, taking Mark Sanderman by the arm. "Your own secret cannot be kept now. Your face is not your fortune. It is your misfortune."

"But there is always more to follow."

Just how it chanced that Ordway felt it necessary to help me escort Sanderman, I don't know. But evidently he did, leaving Alma and the islander to come after us together.

We could hear him speak. He had not rubbed up against the niceties of

civilization in a way that makes it necessary to have secrets.

"Then," he said, "you do not love that man."

"No, God knows I don't love him; I fear him," was the girl's reply.

"Love me," then spoke the man who had been lonely for fourteen years.

"Love me, and as many like him as I can count will never harm you."

After that not a word was spoken till we reached the cabin door.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### LEAVING THE ISLAND.

SLEEP was out of the question. It was not for that we stopped at the cabin door to let Miss Sanderman rejoin her mother. Her mother was outside, fully dressed, and evidently in great mental distress. With her was Captain Delatouche. A short distance away Gordon Morley was examining the ground for footsteps.

"Why—here they come now!" exclaimed Delatouche.

His quick eyes riveted themselves on Joloff's face.

"There has been some amusement, apparently," he said. Delatouche did not like Joloff.

"Alma!" exclaimed Mrs. Sanderman. Then, all other thoughts were lost—swallowed—drowned. She saw her son.

"Mark! My boy! Did they find you?"

The mother threw her arms around the young man and kissed him. Then, being a woman, she began to weep.

"There is nothing to be sorrowful over," said Ordway. "Let us go on to the cave. Is everybody up, Mr. Morley?"

"Everybody is up and about half sane. We saw that you were gone as well as Joloff and your island man, and about a hundred different theories were advanced. We came here, the captain and I, and Mrs. Sanderman was as much exercised as any, when

she found Miss Sanderman was away. What could we think? There was nothing to do but wait."

"The waiting is almost over," I said. "Here is Sanderman. He will go back with us to Paris. Now, as Mrs. Sanderman is dressed, let us get on to the cave. The sooner we get to Paris now the better."

We trooped on to the cave. It so happened that Delatouche and Gordon Morley were on either side of me as we approached it.

"Tell me," said Delatouche. "What happened to Joloff?"

"He had his life saved by a woman."

"You speak like a fable-monger. What happened?"

"Well, the gentle and lonely islander had him up in the air the same as he had Ravary, only Ravary landed in water. Joloff's destination was the front of a big rock. In one second he would have been smashed to a jelly."

"And Miss Sanderman saved him? How? For Heaven's sake, let us know how a woman could stay that—that tempest?"

"She put her arm around his neck and said 'Please don't.'"

Gordon Morley's lips twitched.

"Is that all?" queried Delatouche.

"That's all. Her 'please don't' was far more powerful than all the guns you have, Delatouche, on the Vigilante."

"I believe it. He looks like a lamb now."

Ravary was walking up and down before the cave. Collins was there, evidently disturbed in mind, since he had been of absolutely no use since he left the embassy.

The inspector of police stood still and stared. Mark Sanderman released himself from his mother's arms, and walked toward the inspector.

"I surrender," he said. "Inspector Ravary, I will go to Paris with you."

Ravary seemed about to have an attack of apoplexy. Delatouche grinned.

"You see," said the commander of the Vigilante, turning to Gordon Mor-

ley, "this is not the way things go in a play. The inspector has what he wanted, what he came for, what a war-ship was sent here at the expense of France to get. But Ravary didn't do it himself. It is like a man with a fine new gun aiming at a deer. Before he pulls the trigger the deer walks up to him and says: 'Don't shoot; I'm here. Take me.'"

Delatouche seemed to be having about all the fun there was in the matter. Sanderman was downcast, Alma's eyes were red, and Mrs. Sanderman kept her handkerchief sopping tears. Gordon Morley appeared relieved, and Lord Dulmondy was the most bored man on seven seas.

"I say," he finally managed to get out, "if we have nothing to stay for, what are we staying for?"

Delatouche laughed again. A Frenchman—the right kind of a Frenchman—can see something to laugh at, and his laugh will ease almost any situation. Even the grim face of Ravary relaxed.

"It's breakfast-time," said Ordway. "It is not a question *if* we eat. But *where* we eat. We have a goose that Donaldson has spent hours plucking."

"Don't ask me to eat that goose," said Alma Sanderman. "Why, he put the feathers back to pluck the poor thing all over again. Didn't you, now, Robinson Crusoe?"

An expansive smile lit up the islander's face.

"You call me that, but they wouldn't. They made my first name Crusoe."

"Well, you are not a man to steal another's name. I am sure they did the best they could. Mama, please don't cry any more. Even Mark is calmer than you."

"Well," wept Mrs. Sanderman, "he hasn't a mother's heart."

"Physiologically," remarked Gordon Morley, "that is correct. But let us get down to the main question. We are all bound for Paris, and we have two boats to go in. Now, who goes in the cruiser and who goes with me?"

"The hospitality of the Vigilante is for all," said Captain Delatouche.

"And so," added Morley, "is the hospitality of my yacht."

"Of course, my prisoner goes with me on board the Vigilante," said Inspector Ravary.

"I go where my son goes," answered Mrs. Sanderman. "I know I shall not be accorded a mother's rights when he is before a French judge. But you, Captain Delatouche, will admit that a mother has some rights."

"Of all persons on earth," answered the gallant captain, "a mother to me is first. Please accept a stateroom on the Vigilante, after we have had our breakfast."

"We seem to drift toward the Vigilante," said Alma Sanderman. "Of course, I must go where my mother and brother go."

"Mr. Morley," spoke up Ordway, "it seems we'll have to be your guests."

"Not I," said the islander. "I go where—"

"Oh, come away!" exclaimed Ordway. "It's too soon. You can't expect the action to move as swiftly as it does on the stage. Give the girl a chance to breathe."

"You will keep your funny talk to yourself, or I'll stop it for you."

Ordway looked amazed, and I felt it. Certainly, when we discovered Crusoe, we had unleashed a tempest.

"Oh, I say!" broke in Lord Dulmondy. "If we stay here and argue about how we go, we'll never go, you know. I should say, since we are all going to the same place, we—"

"This isn't a death-bed scene," growled Ravary. "I'm tired of all this talk. I have my prisoner. I propose to get to Paris as soon as I can."

"My launch is ready," put in Gordon Morley.

He was trying not to laugh. A man had been arrested on a neutral island for a murder in Paris, but the tragic element in the thing had been swamped by comedy.

"Come everybody on board the Vigilante," said Captain Delatouche. "M. Morley's yacht can find its way back to Havre without him."

No voice was raised against this, and we gathered on the shore where the launch was waiting, but all could not go in it at once.

There had come into my mind a throbbing, surging idea that I must speak to Alma Sanderman about. I whispered to her:

"Let Crusoe go in the first load. I want to speak seriously to you."

She bowed her head in token of assent.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A PARIS SURPRISE.

At last we were in the launch on the way to the Vigilante. With us were Lord Dulmondy, Joloff, and Ordway.

I managed to get a seat by the side of Miss Sanderman without making my purpose too obvious.

And when I had accomplished that I was lost.

It had been my intention to warn Miss Sanderman, but the words that were so eloquent in my mind failed me when I was where they might be spoken.

Miss Sanderman, however, was not at all abashed.

"Mr. Dagwell," she said, with a smile, "you wanted to tell me something. I fancy I know just what it is. You wish to speak of Crusoe Donaldson."

"I—I—did. Yes, that was my intention."

"Well, you like him very well, do you not?"

"I do."

"Then why may not others? Or do you wish to save him by scolding me?"

"I had no idea of scolding you."

"Then what do you want to say? We shall be on board the French cruiser pretty soon. Better hurry."

"It was not to scold you I asked you to wait for the second trip in the launch. It was—a feeling that— Oh, I am not good at this sort of thing! What I wanted to say is 'Beware.'"

"Speaking of my brother Mark? Or of Mr. Joloff? Or of your island king?"

"The islander. Thank you for helping me along. You have aroused in him a feeling that was not to be unexpected. Please bear with me a moment. You are very—you are very beautiful."

She laughed.

"Are you speaking for Crusoe? Or are you trying to propose to me?"

"I am not trying to propose to you. You know that. But remember, you are the only young woman the islander has ever seen. What I want to say may seem almost brutal. I am sorry if it does. But I shall say it. You must be aware that I am speaking only in your own interests. Crusoe has given his heart to you. He would, at the present time, give you his soul—his life. But what will happen when he sees others?"

"More fascinating than I?"

"None could be. But he doesn't know that. Let me tell you, Miss Sanderman, Crusoe is mentally and physically a giant. Yet he is a child."

Her face sobered at once, and she glanced at me with a woman's look.

"I appreciate what you mean to say and cannot. Yet it would be impossible for me to overlook what he did. It was, if you wish me to acknowledge it, wrong. But it was splendid."

"I know it was," I replied lamely. "Everything the fellow does is splendid."

"He is splendid."

I had not got anywhere. We slid alongside the boarding companion of the Vigilante, and I assisted her to the deck. Captain Delatouche greeted us.

Mrs. Sanderman at once placed her arm around Alma's waist, and Gordon Morley escorted them to a stateroom. Delatouche linked his arm in mine, and

we paced the deck. The lieutenant of the cruiser was getting under way. I glanced at the Elvira. On board the yacht they were hoisting the anchor.

"Dagwell," said Delatouche, "you had a session somewhere in the forest that you have said little about. What happened? Where was the young air-ship man? By the way, we left his air-ship in the trees."

"Let it stay there. Yes, we had a session, all right. We agreed to keep it between ourselves, but there is no reason why you shouldn't know. You have been eminently fair all the way through."

"Somebody had to balance Ravary's eagerness. I knew Nicasse."

"Joloff made a statement. He claims the air-ship the company has in Paris was made from Nicasse's plans."

Delatouche stopped and took a silver cigar-holder from his pocket.

"We will have breakfast soon. Do you smoke before you eat?"

"This is scarcely like other mornings. I will smoke."

"Come to my stateroom."

It was a comfortable, even luxurious cabin to which he led me.

"I would have your friend, Ordway. But he is busy with the islander. Now, tell me what happened to Joloff. He seems smashed up."

"A good deal happened to Joloff. Crusoe was going to smash him against a rock."

"Did Crusoe, as you call him, give Joloff those pretty, pouting lips?"

"No. Mark Sanderman did that. Joloff offered him safety providing Alma married him—Joloff."

"Scoundrel!"

"I think he's worse. And I am worried about the islander and Miss Sanderman. You see, the fellow never saw a woman, and he is head over heels in love with the first one he meets."

Delatouche laughed.

"My dear fellow, we all were."

"But he will see others."

"We all did."

I got little sympathy from Delatouche. I sat there mopingly, puffing at as good a cigar as I ever smoked, while he busied himself a moment writing. There came a knock on his door. He rose, opened it, and Gordon Morley entered.

"A secret conclave, ha!" said the rich American. "It just occurred to me that we forgot something."

"Well," I replied, "if there is anything in this mess to forget, let us forget it."

"But this is important. I would not have thought of it if it had not been for a remark made by Ordway."

"Ordway does make remarks. What was it?"

"Never mind his remark; but you neglected to bring away the baby clothes of your Crusoe Donaldson."

So we had. The excitement of the finishing scenes on the island had driven from Ordway's mind and mine all thoughts of the necessity of trying to establish the identity of our islander. And we were hurrying toward Paris at eighteen knots an hour.

"What I came to say," continued Morley, "is that, when we get through with Sanderman's case, my yacht is at your disposal. We will return to Ors-gov and get what belongs to the giant."

"I propose some music. It all is making my head swim," said Delatouche.

We went on deck. In a few minutes the cruiser's band had assembled, and the patriotic French airs held Crusoe tense.

After that we had breakfast, and Ordway, with some devilish purpose, saw to it that Crusoe escorted Miss Sanderman to the table.

And yet nothing devilish resulted. The islander was the coolest person at the well-served meal.

The run to the French anchorage was made without any incident worth recording. Joloff's lips returned to their normal size, and there was little opportunity for any but a general conversation.

When we left the Vigilante the Elvira was coming to her anchorage a short distance away.

Inspector Ravary managed everything at Havre. In an hour we boarded a special train for Paris. We went to the Prefecture de Police.

A tall, imperturbable commissioner was at a mahogany desk. Inspector Ravary hustled young Sanderman before him, the rest of us grouping ourselves as best suited our convenience.

"M. le Commissionnaire," began Ravary, "I have the honor to report the arrest of the prisoner Sanderman for the murder of M. Nicasse."

The commissioner bowed.

"You have done very well, Inspector Ravary," he said. "But the case of M. Nicasse has surprised us. M. Nicasse is not dead."

"Thank Heavens!" exclaimed several voices at once.

Then Mrs. Sanderman fainted.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### SKIRTING THIN ICE.

THE scene became at once almost volcanic. I doubt if the police headquarters of Paris, not unaccustomed to tempestuous scenes, ever saw a tempest break loose as our own particular tempest did when Mrs. Sanderman fell.

Crusoe knew absolutely nothing concerning the procedure in a place like the prefecture de police. He had been so interested looking at Alma Sanderman's agitated face that he had not realized the true significance of the remark made by the commissioner.

He leaped toward the desk; and that same look of rage we had learned to dread brought Ordway and me to our senses, and we sprang to him. Ordway grasped him by the left shoulder, and I, in my intense fear of police complications, threw my arms around his neck in what would have been, to an ordinary man, a throttling hug.

Ordway was sent skating across the room on one foot, and I flopped on my

back with the sensation of having been hit with a battering-ram.

Morley leaped, grabbed the islander, and shouted:

"Have peace! The boy is free of the charge of murder. His mother has fainted from joy."

Inspector Ravary had knelt to the aid of Mrs. Sanderman; and Mark, with a sob of delight at his own safety, and another of fear for his mother, dropped beside the inspector.

The commissioner looked as though he thought a lunatic asylum had raided the place.

At that moment a tall, well-built man entered from another room. It was the prefect of police.

"Explain this scene," he said calmly.

Gordon Morley motioned to Collins, with the words:

"You were sent from the embassy. It will be better, I think, for you to make the full explanation to the prefect."

"I am acquainted with M. Collins," said the man who had the safety of Paris on his shoulders.

It did not take long for Collins to make what explanations and excuses were necessary.

"Water!" said Inspector Ravary, and an official sprang to obey.

Mrs. Sanderman, with the assistance of all hands, or perhaps in spite of it, returned to consciousness.

By that time Alma, who had seemed to be divided between care for her mother and terror lest Crusoe should get himself in trouble, was kneeling on the floor, with her mother's head in her lap.

"There is a sofa in my private room," said the prefect. "We will adjourn there."

"Sofa?" repeated Donaldson. "I—yes, I know. I remember."

He leaned over and picked up Mrs. Sanderman, who was far from being a small woman. As a mere baby, lifted by a parent, might naturally lay her head on the shoulder of the father in

whom she had the greatest confidence, Alma's mother became inert in the powerful arms that held her.

"Where is it—this sofa?" asked the islander.

His face was now as placid as it had been before he had met anybody but Ordway and me.

"Is it true what the commissioner said? My boy has not killed a man?" moaned Mrs. Sanderman.

"It is true, madam," answered the prefect. "M. Nicasse suffered from a suspension of consciousness not unknown to science, but is now in the hospital, and has absolved the young man from blame in this matter. In fact, his confession turns the tables completely; but the matter is not one for the police of France. It will come under the jurisdiction of the American authorities."

"What do you mean?" asked Joloff, his face turning white.

"I mean," answered the imperturbable prefect, "that if the statement of M. Nicasse is true, you are a thief."

Joloff gasped, and Gordon Morley stepped to his side.

"I have believed this all the time," said the American millionaire. "You told us that the air-ship the International Air Navigation Company was exhibiting was the invention of M. Nicasse."

"Certainly," spoke up Lord Dulmondy. "It was so represented to me."

"Yet," continued the prefect, "M. Nicasse makes the statement that the plans for that air-ship were furnished by the American, M. Joloff."

There was a growl from Ordway, and another from Crusoe Donaldson.

"Keep cool," I cautioned them. "For Heaven's sake, now that everything is coming right, don't spoil it all. You, Sanderman, say nothing."

"Leave it to me," said Morley. "We will bring matters right."

Mrs. Sanderman began to sob in sheer nervous exhaustion. Alma stood white, still, and beautiful.

It was the tempest Ordway and I

had let loose who spoke next. He took the girl's hand, and in a voice that would have brought calm and solace in a sick-room, he said:

"I do not understand quite all. These men of money, who have lived in and learned the civilization I have never known, will help your brother. If there is danger to you, remember I told you on my island that I loved you. So, while I love you, no danger can come near you."

A smile spread over the face of Delatouche. He turned to me.

"I would not like to be the threatening danger."

"Nor I."

Ordway and I made the same remark in the same breath.

Did we fear the consequences of that love so wondrously come into the life of a man who had known no other love? Perhaps we did. But Alma Sanderman did not. It seemed as though she fully appreciated the islander's honesty, the nobility of his soul, and the spirit that led him to become her champion when she needed none. But he did not know that.

"Can M. Nicasse be seen now?" asked Morley.

Ordway gave me a glance that said as plainly as words: "It is not up to us. We are out of it all."

"M. Nicasse is in a condition permitting him to be seen," answered the prefect. "But I would object to so many persons, laboring under the present excitement, invading the hospital."

"I will see him," said Gordon Morley.

It was the best arrangement; for, though Ordway and I had money enough, we were not lawyers. Here was a man competent to do all that human intelligence, great learning, and experience could do.

"I think," said Ordway, "we need not trouble the prefect any longer. I understood you to state that there is no charge against M. Sanderman?"

"None. Nicasse exonerates him fully."

"But he knocked him down," objected Joloff.

"And," drawled the English earl, "so will I, when I can do it without the eyes of the police being so near. You have lied to Nicasse, who is an honest man, and you have lied to me. Mr. Morley will, at my request, take the proper measures to end the International Air Navigation Company. He will also bring suit to compel you to return the money you have fraudulently taken from us, and I will agree at once to enter with Mr. Sanderman into the manufacture of the air-ship he invented."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A NEW NAME FOR CRUSOE.

"GREAT Heavens!" moaned Ordway, as he threw himself on a bed two weeks after the scenes in the prefecture of police which are in a feeble way portrayed in the previous chapter, "I am a dead one, Mr. Dagwell. Never again. Where is he now?"

"Miss Sanderman took him for a spin in the air-ship."

"The new Alma?"

"Yes, the one Lord Dulmondy and Morley are financing. The one made from Sanderman's plans."

Ordway closed his eyes, sighed heavily, and went to sleep. I felt as done up as he did, but I could not sleep. I lit a big cigar and sat down to think.

The unexpected but the inevitable had happened. The tempest had been turned loose.

We, who had planned so carefully how to introduce the islander to civilization, were exhausted, weak, and out of sorts.

He, the last known survivor of the ill-fated Voluna, who had worn the skins of the beasts he had shot, eaten what nature sent to his island, who had never seen a wheel turn, never been to a theater, never heard a woman sing, who killed bears by tearing their jaws apart, was the lion of the day.

All our fears of his turning from Alma Sanderman to some one else had been hurled back at us as though we were the savages, not he.

They rode together in her automobile, and the manly beauty of the giant and the loveliness of the woman were the talk of Paris. And Paris, just then, meant the entire fashionable world. For the Alma, the air-ship now recognized as being Sanderman's, had won the prize, and contracts that meant a profit of millions had been signed.

And Ordway and I, who had already lost half our strength starving and freezing, were completely exhausted with the pace.

Introduce Crusoe to society? Impossible. Society hurled itself at him.

Words fail me when I try to tell what we went through during two weeks.

Our friend the islander stopped a taxicab, and pulled off a wheel to see what the axle had to do with making it go round. He had been taught by Donaldson that vehicles ran on wheels drawn by horses. There being no horses to be seen, the wheels were to him a problem that must be solved.

We went to the opera, and he attempted to leap on the stage to kill the villain and save the tenor, who was in love with the girl he was bound eventually to win.

He was delighted with everything he saw, and made no distinction between the trafficker in shoe-strings and the man who sold air-ships or cashed checks in a banking-house.

But there remained to Ordway and me the one great duty, one that seemed of no importance to any one else except Gordon Morley, of establishing the man's identity.

I let Ordway sleep, and finally fumed myself into a condition of nightmare that lasted till morning.

"We've got to go back to Orsgov and get those clothes to use as a means of proving him the—"

Ordway grunted, and made a move toward a chair as though he had murderous intentions.

"Dagwell," he said, "I warn you. I have suffered much at your hands. Your confounded motor-boat flung me inside a field of ice which I insist was an iceberg. Your grub gave out, and I nearly starved. Your heathenish hospitality led me to an island where we found a poor, unfortunate, moneyless, nameless individual, to whom we gave a name and for whom we made precious plans.

"I recall one day I spoke of introducing him to my sister and her crowd as a lion.

"Last night my sister, who arrived from New York *via* London, entertained him and Alma Sanderman, and we were scarcely noticed. Of course, people are mildly interested in the fact that we floated weeks on an iceberg. But what of that? Anybody could do that.

"But he, Mr. Crusoe Donaldson, the King of Orsgov, rules Paris by his energy and New York by the cabled notices to the press."

He flung a copy of a Paris newspaper at me. It contained two columns of news concerning the islander and the mystery that enveloped him.

His great strength was preached about; and the fact that Donaldson had left no heirs, this having been ascertained by Morley, and making Crusoe comparatively rich, attracted vultures and vampires to the bleeding-ground.

But there was nothing doing. Miss Sanderman held her flaming sword of purity and beauty and will-power between him and any evil, as he held his gigantic strength and absolute fearlessness between her and any harm.

I read the article through, and grinned at Ordway.

"It's all right," I said; "but the fellow ought to know who his parents were."

Ordway snorted.

"He is not worrying much. He has crawled along in his little world without a parent, and now he is independent."



"But something should be done about the island," I persisted. "It is possible that he may have the right of possession."

Ordway wriggled the toes of his shoes and grunted.

"Do you remember the day he said that when he wanted a thing he went and got it?"

"Yes," I answered. "I have a recollection."

"Very well, then. If he wants Orsgov, he'll go take it. He wanted Alma Sanderman, and he took her. I recall a spot nearer to the equator than the island of Orsgov where, under the spreading palm, a soothing feast is spread and—anyway, we've got to get our own affairs in shape. We have a few friends in America, I believe, and there is the lease on that place in Norway."

"Shall we give it up? You are not, evidently, in favor of going back there."

He looked as fierce as Crusoe.

"Go back and live on the bounty of the ice trust for weeks? Nix. I tried that once. Ice is good to cool beer with, or put in a highball. But as a steady diet and place of residence, excuse me."

How long our badinage would have lasted I don't know, but at that moment Morley entered.

"I leave for New York to-morrow," he said. "I have come to have a last talk with you. Everything, so far as your island fiend is concerned, is settled. The Centropolis Bank cables that, with the exception of five thousand dollars spent in advertising for the original Donaldson, the estate is intact. The Dakota mines amount to nothing. But the man is well fixed for life. Nicasse has made a signed statement confirming everything the prefect of police told us. Sanderman refuses to make a complaint in America against Joloff, so there will be no litigation."

"What about the island?" I asked. "Can Crusoe make a claim to ownership?"

"Fudge! The island of Orsgov has been a neglected property of Denmark so long everybody forgot it. He doesn't need it."

"What about Joloff and Miss Sanderman?"

"I'm a lawyer. I do not solve riddles. But if I were Joloff, I'd get out of sight."

"What about the identification of the man as *somebody*?"

"That will probably take some time. We've got to look up the history of the Voluna, and learn what the Danish authorities know about it."

Morley was in a hurry, and I was glad to see him go. He was not gone ten minutes when somebody else was admitted.

A man about sixty years of age, something between six and a half and seven feet high, well dressed, straight and square-shouldered, wearing a grin, and leading a handsome woman nearly his own age, came and shook a paper in my face, then in Ordway's.

"So! You two gentlemen of America conspire to deprive us of the only pleasure that is left to us in this world. Where is he?"

"What's the matter, Danbard?" I asked.

I recognized in the visitor an American wrestler of gigantic strength, famous in the United States and Europe when Ordway and I were boys and feverish for the delights of encounters in the ring.

"Where is he? Where is my little boy?"

"Your—beg pardon—I—"

Ordway loomed up, almost intelligent.

"Do you mean the islander? The fellow who has become the celebrity of two continents?"

"The same. Permit me to introduce my wife, the mother of your celebrity."

I gasped for breath. I managed, however, to get enough to speak.

"But," I stammered, "how can you be sure? There are no identifying marks. Only the clothes he wore when

the Voluna was wrecked, and these are on the island."

"They are not necessary," said the woman. "The statements in all the papers, and the fact that you found him on the island, prove, to my own mind, he is our son. He was the only child on the Voluna when she sailed. It is a matter of simple explanation."

"My husband was at the time making his great tour of the world, giving his wrestling exhibitions, and other evidences of his physical strength."

"We had been to Copenhagen. From there he went to London. I, with my maid and my baby boy Oliver, took passage on the Voluna for New York. As you know from Mr. Donaldson's record, the Voluna was wrecked. In the excitement I became separated from the maid and the boy. She had Oliver, and I was helped, after I had fainted, into a boat that was picked up and was taken to Norway. Of course, I gave up all hope of ever hearing from my baby. I am certain you have found my little Oliver."

Ordway seemed about to have a fit. His face was purple.

There was a heavy tread, then a lighter one, and pleasant laughter. The door of my room was opened, and the islander, with Alma Sanderman on his arm, walked in.

"Dagwell! Ordway!" bawled the giant. "It's all settled, so get ready. We are to be married Wednesday. No ceremony, no—you know what I mean."

THE END.

### ONE PERFECT ROSE.

ONE perfect rose to thee I send,  
Fairest of all my garden grows;  
A score were shorn, that in the end  
Might bloom this flawless rose.

\*A score of blossoms at thy shrine  
Have oft been laid in loving fee;  
I proffer one, dear lady mine—  
One perfect rose to thee!

Catalina Pérez.

"I know," I said, looking at him and then at the blushing face of Alma; "you want a thing, and go and take it. You told us that before. Permit me to introduce a gentleman and lady who will have much to say to you. Madam, permit me to release little Oliver to your care. Ordway, let's go take a smoke."

Well, I don't know what happened when I had helped Ordway to a café, but I know what took place afterward.

Danbard was the father of the islander. This was proven to everybody's satisfaction. Little Oliver was married to Alma Sanderman. The airship business is successful.

We made up a gay party, and in Morley's yacht, which he had not yet taken away, visited Orsgov, where we found all that the castaway had worn when the Voluna was wrecked.

Mrs. Danbard identified them. The matter was settled.

"Little Oliver" picked his mother up, held her at arm's length as though she had been a feather, and let out a roar that would make a Comanche Indian green with envy.

Then he kissed her.

Everybody in the matter is well, prosperous, and happy. The poise of mind, the excellent judgment, and love of his wife prevented the islander from doing that which Ordway and I feared so much.

Orsgov is still there, I believe. But Ordway and I are resting on Broadway, New York, U. S. A.

# At Five Fathoms

by



Frank Williams

**S**KIPPER BIJONAH TANNER was a distinctly angry man when he left the tiny galley of the Gloucester fisherman Rosan; for his brother, the cook, had defied him, not to say humiliated him, before the entire assembled cooking apparatus.

"Out dories and set trawls!" he shouted to the crew that had assembled soberly forward during the family cataclysm.

The men, judging by Bijonah's tone, considered that the cook had again won the argument, and jumped at the order. Dory after dory clattered up from the nest amidships and went over the side filled with trawltubs. From the low deck of the Rosan two men leaped into each, and pulled away nor'east, where the water shoaled, and where the rugged and barren outline of the Nova Scotia coast could be seen through the creeping fog.

"Playin' with fire to-day, ain't ye, skipper?" rumbled Pete Elinwood. "This is sure inside the three-mile limit, an' if the revenue cruiser come along ye wouldn't have a chance."

"Well," replied Captain Bijonah, squinting his eye at the disappearing shore, "if this fog keeps up I won't have no chance of tellin' where I am; that's sure. Besides, I heard that the Penguin had gone south just two days

ago, or I wouldn't be within ten miles of these Johnny Bull waters. Ram-say is the meanest man in the fish-patrol. Why, it was only a month ago he took in the Daisy Bell to Halifax and sold her out of her owner's hands, when half the crew of the Penguin would swear she was outside the boundary."

"If your conscience is satisfied, we are, skipper," said Lute Schofield.

The thrust went home, for Bijonah laid a good deal of store by his conscience, and was always bolstering that vacillating vessel with quotations from Holy Writ—if they agreed with his desires.

The last man to go over the side was Bijonah himself and Tom Hodgkin, the spare hand. They had only one tub of trawl to set, for Bijonah wished, as he expressed it, "to smell the fish"—that is, to determine, if possible, by intuition where the slowly moving hosts of deep-sea dwellers would turn next for feeding-grounds.

For a while they rowed in silence until Tom, who was Captain Bijonah's wife's uncle, chuckled hoarsely.

"I calc'late you an' Del had it pretty warm this mornin', from the sounds of brotherly love in the galley," he ventured, as one favored chides a king by means of flattery. "You sure did give it to him!"

"Del is a great trial to me," admitted Bijonah shortly. "If it weren't that I think he's got a screw loose some'rs, I'd never ship him with me, he's that officious. I allow a man that has black-sheeped a family as long as he has ought to be thankful fer a berth on a schooner like the Rosan. But, no, that ain't enough! He's got to tell me how to run her before all the men at mug-up."

"You laid him out pretty powerful, pretty powerful," reaffirmed Tom, shaking his head. "He shouldn't forget who's skipper after that."

"But, in all fairness to my conscience, I must say he come back at me unusual strong, Tom," rejoined Bijonah. "Fer a fact, he leathered me consid'able. One thing I always did envy about Del was the clean way he had of sayin' things. Now, if he set his mind to callin' you a dum-swizzled, yeller-backed gurry-butt, he'd do it so's you'd never forget it. With me, I get all excited and twisted up; but I flatter myself I gave him to understand his place in the family this mornin', the young sea-puppy. He's twenty-eight, an' the only one of us that never got ahead."

Arrived at the shoals, Bijonah and Tom set their trawl. First the skipper, standing in the stern of the dory, heaved over the anchor and buoy of the line, and then, as Tom slowly pulled along, skilfully fed the rest of it out of the tub without the tangling of a single hook or the loss of a piece of bait. At the finish, when the second-end buoy had splashed into the water, the "shot" of line, with its hundred hooks, lay a tempting and menacing row of morsels to unwary cod, haddock, and halibut.

Besides the skipper's dory seven others were out, and each of these carried five tubs, so that the number of hooks at the service of the Rosan was close to four thousand. Still, with all of these taken by a hungry fish, they would not make much of an impression upon the vessel whose

hold could securely salt away a hundred thousand.

As Tom Hodgkin pulled Captain Bijonah over the smoking water that looked like oil beneath the woolly grayness of the fog, the only sounds were the creak of the oars against the thole-pins, the occasional slap of a wave, and the squawk of the patent fog-horn from the schooner a quarter of a mile away. Round about him somewhere were the other dories, but they were invisible in the all-enwrapping blanket.

At the end of half an hour Bijonah gave the word to return to the Rosan. Tom Hodgkin rested on his oars and waited for the raucous screech from the schooner that Del, the cook, and only man left aboard, was supposed to send across the water every minute. Five times the usual period passed, and no sound came.

"Wonder if the music-box is broke?" ventured Tom, referring to the grinding motion by which the horn was operated.

"Wal, if it is, he's got the conch," snarled Bijonah. "Nothin's broke, I'll wager; I'd like to know what deviltry Del's up to now."

Again they waited, but no blare shivered through the fog. Impatiently Bijonah reached into the stern of the dory and brought up a heavy, battered old conch shell. Standing erect, he sent a shriek out into the gray pall that surrounded him. It was answered presently by others from various points of the compass.

"That's the boys, not the schooner," said Hodgkin. "I'd know the Rosan's old elephant trumpet every time."

Suddenly from out of the northeast there came a puff of wind that stirred the fog veil and smote the fishermen with its icy breath. Captain Bijonah lifted his head as some old wolf-hound might, and smelled the wind.

"Goin' to breeze up," he announced. "Why in tarnation don't he answer?"

The conch sent its blood-curdling shriek again through the shifting vapor, but the only reply was the medley of bass and treble screams from the other dories.

There came another puff of wind that shredded the fog and let in the dull, cold light from the leaden sky. Captain Bijonah looked around. At various distances upon the stirring sea were the seven other dories of the Rosan, and three miles to the southwest the schooner herself, with her four lower sails set, bearing directly away on the freshening wind.

"By the great mains'l," cried Captain Tanner, "he's goin' off an' leave us with a nor'easter risin'! Has the young idiot had a mad fit, I wonder?"

Tom Hodgkin spat carefully over the side of the dory and squinted at the diminishing schooner.

"No, Bijonah, I don't think he has," was the reply; "but I calculate you riled him up considerable this mornin', and ye know Del was always a boy of sperrit."

Captain Bijonah looked blank and worried for a moment.

"Ye don't mean, do ye, Tom, that just because I rated him Del's got ugly, and is sailin' away out of pure cussedness when he can sense a gale?"

"Guess I do, skipper. I was afeard the boy wouldn't stand both your conscience and your jaw forever," replied Tom blandly, which remark shows one of the privileges attached to being a man's wife's uncle, even though he is a skipper.

Bijonah Tanner made no answer, for at that moment the graceful Rosan, heeling to the fresh wind, passed around the point of Painter's Island and out of sight.

## II.

"WHOEVER she is, we've got her this time sure!"

First Officer Wilson, of the revenue cutter Penguin, took the binoculars from his chief and peered steadily

through them at the sailing vessel just breaking from the edge of the fog ahead.

"Right, sir, we have," he replied. "She is inside the three-mile limit, and no mistake. Shall I ring for Mac Donald to drive her?"

"Yes," snapped the captain. "I'll go below now. Let me know when we draw up close."

"Aye, sir."

The Penguin was proceeding south some six miles off the Nova Scotia shore, her reported trip in that direction a week before having been but a blind to cover a voyage north that Captain Ramsay hoped would be rich with American prizes. So far, however, he had failed to detect one in British waters until the black-hulled witch that had just poked her long bowsprit out of the fog.

First Mate Wilson rang the engine-telegraph until Mac Donald answered him.

"Forced draft, chief," he said; "there's a schooner ahead caught in the act, and if the old man doesn't nab her he'll nearly blow his brains out."

The blunt-nosed Penguin forged forward more swiftly to the increased thrust of her propeller and headed directly toward the schooner farther inshore.

"Drat that wind!" cried Wilson as, through the glasses, he saw the vessel heel to a fresh impulse that threatened every minute to dispel the fog banks. He consulted a chart. "She must have just come out from the southern end of Painter's Island," he added. "That proves her guilt beyond doubt."

Anathematizing the wind did not diminish it—rather the contrary—and Wilson, knowing his Banks lore, realized they were in for a steady nor'easter. Consequently, with the idea of getting canvas off the fisherman without delay, he ordered a shot put across her bows, and presently the three-pounder barked peremptorily, the ball ricocheting a cable's length in front of her.

By way of reply, her tops'ls appeared slowly one after the other. Wilson, knowing the smartness of Gloucestermen in general, wondered at this and scanned her with his glasses.

"Only one man to make and take in sail and steer her!" he cried aloud. "By Jove, this isn't only fishing—it's smuggling, I'll wager!"

Another shot, closer this time, whistled across the bows of the *Rosan*; but the cheerful-faced young man aboard of her merely looked at his pursuer and grinned as he eased her flight through the rising gale.

To describe that race would be to rehearse a comedy well known to every American fisherman in the Banks latitudes. Had the wind risen to the height expected, the *Penguin* would have been hull-down behind the *Rosan* in three hours. But it merely remained a stiff breeze, and the cutter, wrenching twelve knots out of her tired engines, was just able to keep the schooner within a long gunshot.

It was already late afternoon, and, as the early September darkness drew on swiftly, Wilson sent for Captain Ramsay to come to the chart-room.

He did so, snarling and angry because of the *Penguin's* failure to over-haul her prey.

"That idiot has laid a course direct for the Breakwater Shoals," said Wilson. "He must be crazy."

Ramsay looked at the chart and saw where the tiny figures told of water shoaling from thirty fathoms to three.

"Can you make out his lights?"

"Yes, sir, and he's holding a direct course."

"We'll follow him till we scrape the bottom," snarled Ramsay.

"Yes, sir."

There was a heavy sea running, despite the comparative moderation of the wind, for a light air will kick up nasty waves in shallow water, and the *Penguin* plunged and rolled for another hour.

"Her lights are brighter; I believe we're gaining on her," cried Wilson suddenly, and passed the night-glasses to the captain.

"We are," reported the latter grimly. "Keep right after her."

And they kept after her until the *Rosan* was scarcely a mile away; for Del Tanner, fearful of squalls in handling the vessel at night alone, had shortened sail until she carried only two jibs and a foresail.

"Send a man to the starboard bow with the lead," ordered Ramsay, consulting his chart with a worried look.

The heavy lead whirled about in great circles from the sailor's hand, suddenly shot forward, and plumped into the sea ahead of the *Penguin*.

"Fifteen fathom!" came the cry to those in the pilot-house.

The cutter surged drunkenly into the black waves, shipping water over her bow at every plunge.

"Ten fathom!" came the voice of the leadsman.

"By Jove, she's still on her course!" cried Ramsay, with the glasses to his eyes. "He must want to pile her up pretty badly. Stand by the engine telegraph, Wilson!"

"Eight fathom!" There was no speech now in the pilot-house. Each man mentally assured himself of the *Penguin's* twenty-two-foot draft, and prayed that the lunatic aboard the *Rosan* might come to his senses before it was too late.

"Six fathom, and shoaling fast!" sang out the leadsman, making his instrument whistle above his head as he whirled it.

With his hand on the telegraph, Wilson stood tense and ready for the word from Ramsay should that word come.

"Five fathom!"

"Hard up your helm!" snarled the captain. The wheelman spun the spokes and the *Penguin* veered off into the trough of the sea, rolling until she shipped water over the windward rail with every plunge.

"Curse that fiend!" muttered Ram-

say as the cutter made toward the open sea. "I hope he runs her high and dry and breaks her back."

"Look! Look!" cried Wilson suddenly, pointing to the spot where they had seen the schooner last.

All hands followed the direction of his arm. For an instant the dizzy whirl of the Rosan's lights was visible; but the next they were suddenly extinguished, and only the whistling wind blew over the place where she had been.

"Half speed!" cried Ramsay. "We'll have to stand by till morning and pick up that man if he got away in a dory."

All night the Penguin cruised back and forth with double lookouts stationed on the fo'c's'le head and the crow's-nest. Her life-boats were swung out on the davits, and the watch abandoned other work and stood ready to leap into them at the first cry from the darkness outside.

It was not until six o'clock brought the first gray glimmer of day that anything was seen. Then one of the lookouts made out an indistinguishable mass drifting slowly toward the Penguin from the northeast. Signaling for full speed, the captain ran down to investigate.

The moving object or objects proved to be eight dories, closely bunched, drifting stern foremost with the wind. Over each bow the painter ran to a drag that had been made of the anchor, oars, and thwarts, and on the bottom of each dory two men lay flat on their backs, bailing out water as fast as it poured in over the low gunwales.

The lift-boat of the Penguin went over smartly, and in half an hour the drenched and exhausted crew of the Rosan were in the cabin, drinking quarts of hot coffee, while the dories were hoisted and nested amidships. When the men had recovered somewhat and were stowed away in bunks. Captain Ramsay came below and asked for the skipper.

Bijonah Tanner lifted his shaggy head and demanded what was wanted.

"You are the captain and crew of the Rosan, aren't you? I saw the name on your dories."

"Yes."

"Well, I'm afraid your schooner is lost," said Ramsay in a kinder tone than he had used for many a day. "I made out her name late yesterday afternoon when we were chasing her. She had only one man aboard, didn't she?"

"Yes. God bless him! My brother!" growled Tanner furiously.

"That's the one!" continued Ramsay with conviction. "The lunatic piled her up on the Breakwater Shoals at midnight or thereabouts. She must have pounded to pieces, for there was not a stick of her left this morning."

Captain Bijonah gave a great groan and lay back speechless in his bunk. Not a word did the men of the crew say, for Gloucester men through generations have become accustomed to loss and tragedy at sea.

"How'd you come to get in such a fix?" inquired Ramsay.

"I'd given Del the dressin' down of his life in the mornin'," replied Bijonah brokenly, "and he got ugly an' ran off with the boat to give us a scare, I guess. Then he prob'ly f'und he couldn't handle her an' drove her onto the rocks. Now, I ain't got neither boat nor brother, an' both on 'em was all I had of their kind."

"It's too bad, old man," said Ramsay, really sympathetic; "it's too bad." And he departed hastily up the companionway, never mentioning fish or the three-mile limit, as he had firmly intended doing when he went below.

### III.

A DAY later the revenue cutter deposited the shipwrecked crew at Lunenburg, from which remote point Bijonah Tanner attempted to get into communication with his owners in Gloucester. To his disgust, however, the old man found that the telegraph-office was out of commission, but would be ready for use the next day.

Being short of cash for traveling expenses, he decided to remain the necessary time instead of moving with his whole crew to Halifax. He would continue to wait until he received a money-order that would enable them to exist until they could be picked up at Halifax by one of the firm's schooners.

Arrived at this determination, some six hours after the departure of the Penguin, the whole oil-skinned, pipe-smoking procession clumped through the main street of the town toward the wharf, there to argue endlessly and wait for the next approaching meal-time.

The street, passing behind a large canning factory, met the pier at an acute angle. Emerging from behind this obstruction, the whole crew, as one man, looked up and out to sea. Then, also as one, their jaws sagged and remained hanging, their eyes popped, and their limbs refused the service to which they were ordained.

For there, trim as you please, undamaged and ship-shape, rode the Rosan, with young Del Tanner leaning over the rail and grinning in fiendish glee. Captain Bijonah found his faculties first, and when he spoke it was with deep piety.

"It's her Flyin' Dutchman come to ha'nt me fer my cussedness to me own blood brother!" he said, rubbing his sleeve across his eyes to dispel the vision.

But there was no ghostliness about things when the voice of Del replied: "It's time something come to ha'nt ye about it, ye old shell-back!" and the whole crew whooped aboard with a roar of unsteady laughter.

"But what did ye do it for, ye young fiend?" asked Big Dick after all had mugged up in the cabin. "Why did ye go off an' leave us that way? Was ye angry at Abijah here?"

"Angry, your sea-boots!" retorted the young scapegrace, who had suddenly become the hero of the occasion. "I heard that revenue cutter bellerin'

in the fog, an' I tried to get away from her."

"But we didn't hear any whistlin'!" exclaimed Ellinwood.

"Ah, ha, I thought as much! You know as well as I do, Pete, what tricks a fog will play on a man. That was one of 'em. I heard it, an' you did not. But that ain't all. I figgered she was comin' no'th and wouldn't have a chance to see the dories, except by dumb luck; while with me, alone on the schooner, my topmasts might have been gleamin' in the sun. So what did I do but break for Painter's Island, plannin' to lie there until she had gone by. Whether Bijonah's conscience told him he was fishin' inside the three-mile limit, I suppose none of us'll ever know; but mine told me that if I went inside Painter's Island and got caught, there'd be nothing but confiscation of the Rosan and jail for me.

"Powers o' darkness, listen to this! After a while I didn't hear no more bellerin' of the whistle, an' I thought I would just run round Painter's and fetch up in my old berth. No sooner did I get the bowsprit past the island than I ran out into sunshine, and there was the Penguin goin' south with me. Well, the way they fired her must've broke some backs below. After that I just run."

"But the wreck! Del Ramsay was sure sartin you had gone to glory! What about that?"

"Wal, it's like this. Bijonah there thinks I'm an idiot and don't know nothin' because I get wild once in a while. But I knew a thing or two this time. I knew the Rosan was light, because we hadn't much fish in her. I knew the tides were exceptionally full just now, and I knew the Penguin couldn't chase me into the shoals. So I broke across the shoals in four fathoms o' water—the schooner draws three, you know—and headed for Gantle Rock close inshore.

"You know how she stands out there like a great stone wall, with a deep channel between her and shore



and a safe little harbor? Well, once I struck across the shoals, I slid the Rosan behind there and lay calm as you please, made fast to rock fore and aft, and a million gulls screamin' an' yellin' day and night. When Ramsay saw my lights go out, of course, he thought sure I'd struck and gone down, and I'm blame glad he did for all hands. Next day I put the dingey over and saw him pick you up. Then I followed him down here, keeping behind the islands and shoals all the way.

"Some day I'm goin' to make a chart of the good things along this coast an' hand 'em to Ramsay just to show him how easy he is. And now I think I'll turn in for a kink of sleep.

Meanwhile all hands can chip in and present me with a handsome purse for saving the Rosan."

After which bit of youthful insolence Del Tanner rolled over, and was soon snoring deeply.

Tom Hodgkin turned to Captain Bijonah, scowling.

"Better give that boy a dressin' down when he wakes up," said Tom. "He makes too light of his elders and betters."

But Bijonah Tanner shook his head sagely.

"I don't sense it that way," he replied. "So far as I kin see, Del's the only one o' the family that gives any promise of amountin' to anythin'."

# Before the Dark



by

## Leslie Navergal Bradshaw

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE PROPHECY.

**S**ILENCE followed the prediction of the fortune-teller. The gipsy's earnestness had been impressive. The greatest skeptic could not doubt that her prophecy, in spite of the improbability of its fulfilment, was at least honest.

The two regimental officers in the tent glanced at each other, and involuntarily averted their eyes. The experience which had begun as a frolic, now wore a somewhat different aspect. It was becoming, in fact, almost sinister.

Bennett and Osgood had met about half an hour earlier not far from the tents, which were on the edge of the

parade-ground. The two were officers in the State National Guard. The 171st Regiment had for the past ten days been in summer quarters. This was the last afternoon of camp.

All morning out on the parade-ground companies had been drilled and maneuvered and put through their paces generally. The day was hot, and it had been sticky work. But it had to be done, for in the afternoon the Governor was to review the regiment, and it behooved every one to be at his best.

There were to be inducements to do one's best other than the Governor's presence, however. In addition to the general spectators, many ladies— young ladies—were to witness the proceedings. The officers had not stinted themselves in their invitations to their sisters and cousins, and other men's sisters and cousins.

Osgood had hardly seen Bennett since morning, when they had been busily engaged in drilling their respective companies. Bennett had, in fact, kept by himself. The news he had received that day was not of the best. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to think.

Osgood had come across him soon after lunch, on the edge of the parade-ground, and evidently lost in thought.

"Hello, there!" said Osgood from behind for the second time.

Bennett turned round.

"Oh, hello, Osgood! You're out early."

"Yes. But what were you doing?"

"When?"

"Just then."

"Only thinking. Now that you've come to decorate the landscape, I shall stop."

"You were dreaming. What was it about? Why do you choose this out-of-the-way spot for your meditation? Out with it."

"I was only thinking how changed this place will be in an hour or so."

"It will. The review is at three, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"It'll be late, of course," said Osgood. "I never knew a review at camp to come off on time. These things are always late. Most things are, except," he added, with a sigh, "bills."

Bennett smiled. Some people appear to advantage when they smile. Bennett was one of them. Not that his face in repose was forbidding. It was not. It was rather pleasing. He was not handsome, and he was not what the lady novelist is fond of calling "distinguished-looking"; but his face had a certain strength, and his eyes a certain open frankness which made one feel that their owner was a man to be trusted.

"What are you moaning about?" he inquired. "Bills never trouble you, with all your cash. I could do with some of it just now."

"Why, is anything wrong? Business?"

"Well, that's a thing I was thinking about just then. Business is not all it might be. Still, we needn't go into that now. We are military men to-day. We don't become business men again until to-morrow."

"We're certainly military," said Osgood, glancing at himself.

He looked well in his officer's parade uniform. He invariably looked neat and well-dressed, but to-day he appeared to particular advantage. Osgood was one of those men whose clothes seem really to belong to them. He was always graceful, at ease. He was a man of wealth, education, and leisure—not an athlete like Bennett. And when one looked closer at him one saw that his face did not have the same virile, healthy look as Bennett's, the look which comes from a well-lived life. It was tired. It was worn.

For the time being, however, it was animated and alive and fairly pleasing. He was in an excellent humor, a contrast to his friend.

All day Bennett had been depressed. During the morning, when there had been many things military for him to

attend to, he had had to concentrate his mind; but directly his duties were over the depression returned.

Osgood's talk caused him to make an effort to overcome it. And the thought of the presence of *one* of the visitors to the review, who was coming at his special invitation, helped him more.

The camp, and particularly the attraction of the review on this last day, had been a magnet for people of a different kind from the regiment's visitors. Numbers of shrewd small dealers and venders had swooped down on the outskirts of the parade-ground and camp lines. They brought with them innumerable attractions—various kinds of side-shows, weighing-machines, moving-picture tents, candy and popcorn stands, and all the useful and ornamental side lines of a county fair. They intended to make a sort of fête out of the last afternoon at camp.

Bennett and Osgood had started to stroll along in the direction of these allurements. They did not hurry. The main event of the afternoon was not due to come off for another hour.

"You're having a visitor, of course," remarked Osgood casually. "I suppose you'll want to meet her and escort her to her seat?"

"Yes. Miss Trevor. But I don't expect her for half an hour yet."

Miss Edith Trevor was the bright particular star in Bennett's firmament of feminine friends. He thought more of her than any other girl he knew.

Miss Trevor also occupied a prominent place in Osgood's feminine stellar system, although no one but himself was aware of it—not even the girl herself yet. And especially not Bennett.

"Let's go in here," suggested Osgood, stopping short. They had reached a fortune-teller's tent, one of the "we'll-tell-you-your-name-first" kind.

Bennett was not attracted by the prospect. He had no faith in fortune-telling, or any of the allied arts or industries. Osgood, however, believed in them profoundly.

Bennett was amused by his superstition, but at the same time sorry to see it. A man hates to see a friend clinging obdurately to a weakness. None of Bennett's arguments had ever been able to convince Osgood that it *was* a weakness. Osgood would cite numerous cases with which he had personal acquaintance of people who had profited by following a prediction, and even more numerous cases of people who had not profited, but had distinctly suffered by not taking heed to one.

"Why should we go in?" objected Bennett. "It's only waste of time. It's all a fake."

"You always say that because you are prejudiced. You say it now because you are a bit in the dumps. Cheer up, and step lively. This is going to be a great afternoon, especially for you. Start it off with a little excitement. Come and hear your future told."

"I know what my future is. At least, the immediate future."

"What?"

"Something sensible; that is to say, getting cool. I recollect various people speaking of quenching their thirst on these hot days. Rumors have reached me that there is a tidy little spot where the wish may be consummated. I seem to remember such a place. We might go and look for it."

"All right, we will; but it won't take long to drop in here first. Come on."

Bennett resignedly followed him into the tent. After all, absurd as fortune-telling was, it might prove diverting and take his mind off his troubles until *she* came.

The tent will get no description. It was not at all a nice tent. It was not clean. And it did not look as though it ever had been.

On entering, they found the prophetess seated on a stool. The audience did not take long. Fortune-tellers nowadays have to be brief and to the

point. Especially when business looks at all like being brisk, and there is any danger of losing customers. And besides, as we all do sooner or later, they learn that what is given sparingly is valued and appreciated most—and wanted more of.

According to the gipsy, the futures of the two men were to be widely dissimilar. Osgood was destined to be the more fortunate. Everything pointed to prosperity for him. He would be well known, and, as the world calls it, successful and happy.

Bennett's outlook, on the other hand, was dark. He would have no such solid success. It would not be any one thing permanently. His energies would be scattered, and his achievements scattered also.

Osgood, as usual, took the predictions seriously. Perhaps this was because his own future was foreseen as so promising. It is human to attribute weight to the declarations of those who favor us. Or again, to do him justice, perhaps it was simply because he really believed in fortune-telling.

Bennett laughed. For the time his depression had left him.

"You seem to have a pull here," he said. "What have I done to deserve this? I never harmed the old lady."

"Shut up!" remonstrated Osgood. "This is serious."

"Thanks for telling me. Well, is that all, or only the first instalment? Time is going, and I can't stay here much longer. What has come over our hostess? She's as silent as a tomb. Perhaps she's forgotten the combination. She has a worried look. What's that thing in her hand? A crystal? Three cheers for the crystal! The potent object. I express the opinion that this is getting slow. I always said you had a strange idea of entertainment. Give her a prod and start her up again."

But Bennett's levity was premature. Although she had been silent for some minutes, the fortune-teller had not

finished. She knit her brows more closely, and continued to mutter to herself.

The two men watched her in interested silence.

At length she began to speak audibly again. Possibly she disliked frivolous interruptions generally. Possibly she very much disliked Bennett's frivolity and skepticism in particular. At any rate, her investigations began to take a still gloomier turn.

She said that she saw rocks ahead. She went further, and declared that they were big rocks—serious obstacles in Bennett's path. And as for troubles, there were going to be heaps, all big.

Then she reached her climax. In a positive, final tone she declared that a great darkness was coming into his life.

"I might get married," suggested Bennett lightly. "That would extinguish me a bit."

"Cut it out," warned Osgood. "She hasn't finished yet."

The seer seemed too engrossed to notice the comments. She pursed up her lips into a sour expression, blinked a few times, and began to speak again.

"I see a great darkness, young man," the fortune-teller declared—"a great darkness coming into your life."

"She said that before," whispered Bennett.

Osgood frowned.

The seer ignored him. She spoke again, first in a low tone, and then, as she found herself, with increasing vehemence.

The darkness, she averred, was going to be great and lasting. It was about to begin now. Bennett would gradually, very gradually, lose his sight. At first it would be apparent only occasionally and in trifling ways. For some time it might even pass unnoticed, even by close friends, but the affliction would develop until at length, one day when he might least expect it, his sight would suddenly and completely give way—flicker out like a burned

match. Then it would all be darkness. He would be blind, blind for life.

## CHAPTER II.

### ENTER THE GIRL.

THE dead silence which succeeded the prediction continued unbroken for several minutes. The two men waited to hear if the gipsy would say anything more. It soon became evident that she would not.

At length a movement of Osgood's broke the tension. Bennett met the seer's eye, and looked hard at her. She returned his gaze evenly. Osgood looked at him, half in sympathy, half in curiosity.

Bennett was silent. He was conscious of a great desire to get away, to get out into the air, to be where he would see—

He touched Osgood's arm.

"Come on," he said; "let's get out of this."

He turned and made for the entrance. Osgood paused to pay the prophetess, who thanked him gravely, and followed.

Bennett had already gone some distance.

"What's the hurry?" asked Osgood as he caught him up. "You have plenty of time."

"Not now. Before the parade begins I want to find Miss Trevor and get her a good location, and so on."

"Oh, I see," said Osgood in a different tone.

Bennett was too preoccupied to notice it. His temporary cheerfulness had vanished. The former mood had returned.

"Well," inquired Osgood at length, "what did you think of it?"

Bennett laughed without amusement.

"She revenged herself, didn't she? Evidently it doesn't pay to display one's disbelief. I wonder what worse dose she would have given me if I had said more?"

"None, of course," returned Osgood in dignified defense. "It isn't any question of giving doses. It's simply what she sees. She's a sort of instrument, so to speak."

To Osgood's surprise, Bennett did not retort with his usual ridicule. On the contrary, he seemed to give some consideration to what Osgood said.

"I wonder," he remarked thoughtfully, "if there *could* be anything in it? It doesn't seem possible, because the whole business is so obviously a fake. And yet—" he broke off.

Osgood took advantage of the opportunity to press home his arguments. For once he was sensible enough to restrain himself and introduce his views more smoothly by half agreeing with Bennett.

"A lot of them *are* fakes, of course, but some are on the level. This one is, I think. I should be inclined myself to put a good deal of faith in what she said."

There was a pause; they walked on in silence.

"You know," said Bennett, as though continuing a train of thought, "I've noticed once or twice lately that at times my sight hasn't been quite all it might. Nothing much, of course."

"Well, what?"

"Oh, only trifling things. In fact, I hadn't really thought about them until we saw this old woman."

Osgood's face was grave.

"This does not sound good," he said. "And it just occurs to me that to-day's isn't the first prophecy that has been made about you."

"Why, was there another?"

"Do you remember a couple of years ago, when we went on that cruise, Edith—I mean, Miss Trevor—read your hand? Just after you had met her."

Bennett's face lit up.

"I should say I *do*," he said.

Two years previously he had indeed met Miss Trevor, and she had read his hand, although only in fun. And soon afterward, when that playful incident

was forgotten, and many things had happened, and they had seen a good deal of each other, their acquaintance had reached a stage that might be described as a sort of twilight region between friendship and love. The twilight had been deepening steadily ever since.

"And do you remember," continued Osgood, wincing slightly, "her prophecy? It was almost identical with this one. She, too, foretold a great darkness for you. And she said it might come in two or three years' time."

"Yes, but that was only in fun. And I don't think she meant that kind of darkness. Besides, she knew nothing about palm-reading. She said so herself."

"But it's strange that the woman this afternoon should say the same thing. And then there's your own experience—the things you have noticed lately yourself. They all point in the same direction. It looks—"

He hesitated.

"Looks what?"

"Well," said Osgood uncomfortably, "it looks as though it might be coming on."

"What might be coming on?"

"You know what I mean—this eyesight trouble. Of course, it might not happen at all. But, then, it might happen soon."

"Oh, the matter of the two predictions is only a coincidence," retorted Bennett lightly. "You're always worrying about these fortune-tellers."

"Perhaps; but it has always been in connection with myself. This is different. This is you. I tell you, Bennett, you may laugh, but it looks as though it might be really a serious matter. Prevention is better than cure, anyway. If I were you I would go to an oculist and have my eyes examined. I'd do it right away."

"Well," rejoined Bennett carelessly, "perhaps you're right. I suppose I would better see about it, and will."

He glanced at his watch.

"Here," he added, "I must be going. I've got to meet Miss Trevor. She ought to be here almost any minute now. She may have arrived already. Suppose we go see?"

Osgood made no objection.

Although he stood high in the list of her friends, he was losing in the race of love, he knew. But Miss Trevor's society was still very attractive to him. The fact that she preferred another—a fact he suspected and of which he felt fairly certain—did not lessen his desire to see her. In other words, he had not yet given up.

Osgood was not one of those intense people who must either own or do without. And in his heart he had not yet abandoned all hope of owning. He knew the odds were against him. He knew that Bennett had made great strides in Miss Trevor's estimation—such great strides that every one else, and there were many others in the field, was left far behind, himself included, although he might be classed as the leader of the also-rans.

He did not intend, however, to relinquish all thought of Edith Trevor until she had actually married Bennett. Until the ceremony itself actually took place he had a chance. He meant to make the most of it.

Most men are unable to conceal their great emotions from their intimates. But no one knew Osgood's aim. No one had even an inkling of the state of his feelings. Perhaps this was because he had such perfect control of himself, of every feature, every gesture. Perhaps it was because he had no intimates.

Edith Trevor herself had no idea of the strength of Osgood's desire. She knew, as every girl knows men's feelings toward her, that he admired her. She had an idea that he liked her better than others, that he sought her society more than he did other girls'. But she did not suspect more than that. Much less did Bennett. The two men never discussed the subject. Their understanding, entirely unspoken, was

that no outside matter, such as being in love, would make any difference to them.

Apparently it did not, but deep down in his heart Osgood had determined to leave nothing undone to win Edith Trevor. He did not mean to carry her off, or do anything like the heroes of romantic novels and musical comedies. But he was hoping and watching just the same.

And he had told himself he would not lose—whatever the cost, he would win.

They were walking briskly now, passing without more than a glance at the stands and tents that enticed the ordinary stroller. Already some ladies had arrived in the enclosure on the far side of the parade-ground. Even at the distance they could see that many of the chairs were occupied.

Before long a large number of fair spectators would be there. One of them would be Edith Trevor. At the thought of it Bennett quickened his step.

His eager search was soon rewarded. A pretty girl in a white dress, accompanied by an older woman, presumably her mother, was coming toward him in the distance. Apparently she knew who was approaching, for she started to walk slower, as though she had been hastening to a destination which was now reached.

Bennett felt his heart beating faster and his cheeks growing red.

It is never at any time easy to walk any distance under observation. One's face begins to feel the color of a lobster, one's feet protrude alarmingly and seem to cover acres, one's knees are unreliable, and one's hands, which seem to belong absolutely nowhere, assume enormous proportions. And when one's progress is being watched by the girl of all girls, the one whose opinion and regard *matters*, the ordeal is increased a hundredfold.

The only antidote to pronounced self-consciousness, we are informed by the writers of books on social etiquette,

is to think about the other person and to transfer one's interest from oneself to him—or her. This would be easy were one sitting in the dark. It is not easy on a bright summer's afternoon, with people all round looking at one, sizing him up.

But as Bennett drew close he forgot himself. All he saw was Edith, who was smiling at him in a way which showed clearly that she was glad to see him.

He and Osgood raised their caps and said good afternoon. Then there was one of those pauses which, occurring at the beginning of a meeting, make progress difficult. It was just saved from becoming an awkward silence by Osgood's suggesting that they go on to the stand.

They found a good point of vantage, and Mrs. Trevor made herself comfortable.

Her daughter remained standing, with the two men a yard or so away. Osgood was debating mentally whether or not to mention the fortune-teller and to recall to Miss Trevor her own prediction of two years before. He looked across at Bennett. Bennett was thoughtful and quiet. Osgood decided that he would say nothing about it—not at the moment, at any rate.

Some one addressed a remark to him, and he turned to answer. At the same moment Bennett made a remark to the girl. Conversation began. It continued briskly for some little time. At length Bennett, looking round, saw that Osgood was talking to a man in uniform who seemed to know a great deal about the right way to drill troops. At least, he talked as though he did.

Bennett saw, with satisfaction, that Edith and he were practically alone.

"There's time for a stroll," he said to her in a low tone. "Do you care for it? I have one or two things I want to say to you."

She thought for a moment or two. "All right," she said. "I'll tell mother."

She went and spoke to Mrs. Trevor. Then she came back to where he was standing and looked up at him inquiringly.

"Let's go over there," he said, indicating one side of the parade-ground.

She looked in that direction.

"But there isn't anything there," she said. "Everything's on this other side. The side you mean is deserted. I don't think I see a single person."

"That," he answered, "is exactly why I chose it. Will you come?"

They started off.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HER ANSWER.

THEY left the reviewing-stand and made their way toward the deserted stretch which Bennett had indicated. Many admiring glances were cast at the girl by his side. Bennett noticed them, and felt a sense of pride at being with her, which called up the thought of how splendid it would be if he were to have her with him, not occasionally, as at present, but always.

Generally he did not allow himself to dwell long upon the prospect, but to-day the idea seemed to cling to him. He kept thinking about it, so much so that he practically made no attempt at conversation.

She noticed his preoccupation.

"Well, Mr. Serious, what are you thinking about?" she asked, with the inflection which gives the most commonplace remarks the warmth of real interest.

Having no neat and polished reply ready, Bennett fell back on a very weak phrase.

"Nothing in particular," he said.

"You *are*—with that solemn face!"

"Except you, of course."

"And I am nothing in particular?"

He looked at her quickly, and suddenly seemed to shake off his preoccupation.

"I didn't really mean that, of course," he said, surreptitiously touch-

ing her hand. "You are everything to me."

He broke off and looked round. They were now far away from every one. Bennett felt an intuition that this was his opportunity. He might not have another such for some time.

"Everything," he repeated. "To me you mean more than anybody or anything else. You know that, don't you?"

"No; why should I?"

"I want you to."

"Well—" She hesitated.

"You believe me, don't you, Edith?"

"Of course. I would always believe you. But this is different, somehow. It seems such a big thing. One must have an enormous opinion of oneself to believe it without question. I feel afraid to."

"Why?"

"Because—because, I think—one is always most cautious about accepting things one most wants to believe."

He clasped her hand now, all of it. She did not draw it away.

"So you *want* to believe!" he said.

"And, after all, it's only your due, in a way. You must be used to receiving homage. You receive it from everybody. I'm not anybody special. It would be different if it were the other way about."

He paused. "Very different," he went on. "Still, if you will, you can tell me something."

He hesitated.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Well—" He paused again. Then he plunged on: "Say that you like me."

He got it out quickly all in one breath. It was not easy for him to say it. Like most people gifted with a sense of humor, Bennett had a dread of showing emotion, of displaying his feelings. He feared to look ridiculous. Anything even remotely connected with sentiment made him feel uncomfortable. But he did want to hear her say that one short sentence.

"Of course," he added, still more



hastily, "you won't say it unless you mean it."

Her eyes met his in a level gaze.

"I like you," she said.

"Very much?"

"Yes."

"Do you like many people very much?"

"No."

"How many?"

"A few."

"And I'm one of those few?"

"Yes."

His face lighted up.

"I can hardly realize it. It is splendid. It far outweighs what I said."

"Oh, no!"

"You are modest. You see, your liking me much means far more than my liking you much. So many like you. I am only one of a crowd. I wonder you don't get used to it."

"They don't all like me to that extent. And some are worth more than others."

"I want to be one of those. I've been afraid to think I was vain. But I am feeling reckless now. So I am going to ask you another question. May I?"

She nodded.

"Well," he continued, "of those few you probably like one or two considerably more than the others. And sooner or later you will come to like one a great deal more than all the others—more than anybody else."

"I may."

"You will. Could I become one of those special few? Could I even become the *one*? You know what I mean."

He spoke shamefacedly, for he was in earnest. Deep down inside he knew how he felt, and knew what he wanted to say. He wanted to say many things, and say them better than this, but he was handicapped by a terror of appearing dramatic, and of not carrying conviction.

"Why should you?" she asked.

"Because I want to. I want to more than I want anything else. I like you

better than any one else I know—and better than any one else likes you."

He waited apprehensively after adding the last sentence. He wondered how she would take it.

She was silent for a few minutes. Then she looked up at him.

"How do you know you do?"

"Because no one could like you more than I do. It isn't possible."

She was silent again. He watched her in perplexity. Was this boring her, or was she—liking it?

"Could I become that—one?" he repeated diffidently.

"I don't know," she answered.

"My liking people doesn't depend on how much they like me. A repulsive person might like me very much, but that wouldn't mean that I liked him even at all. One doesn't return liking in proportion as one receives it, on a sort of scale. It's spontaneous."

"You are right. So be frank. Do you like any one much better than me?"

"No."

"Do you like any one at all better?"

She looked ahead of her thoughtfully.

"No," she said slowly, after a short pause.

The coast was free then! Bennett felt an almost irresistible impulse to take her in his arms and tell her things he had no right to tell her just yet.

And yet something told him that he could go further—that this was the right moment to go further.

He went further.

"Do you," he asked—"do you like any one as much? It sounds horribly conceited, I know," he added; "but—"

"I don't think I can answer that question."

She spoke in a friendly tone. She did not seem to be offended. Boldness urged Bennett on once more.

"Why not?"

"I can't. I don't know. I couldn't say 'Yes,' you see, at least until—" She stopped.

"Well, what?" he prompted gently.

"Until I knew, and could really mean it—really be sure."

"Then you're not sure now?"

She shook her head very slightly.

"I did not expect you to be," he confessed. "But you consider the probability of it, and that's far more than I thought possible."

"I wonder," she said musingly, "why you think it worth so much. No one else would regard my preferring them as such a big thing."

"Perhaps—because no one else thinks as much of you as I do," he returned. "When will you know? Will it be very soon?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I know now, but—" She broke off. "But I don't," she added wearily.

"And in those times," he persisted eagerly, "is it I? What I mean is, am I sometimes the one?"

She did not answer. She was looking ahead; not at anything in particular, but with unseeing, troubled eyes. He thought she was trying to decide, and refrained from interrupting her. Minutes passed. Still she seemed to deliberate.

"Am I?" he repeated.

She started.

"Please excuse me. I was thinking. Not about that, though. I knew that. You are the one—sometimes."

A look of awe came into Bennett's face. For a moment or two he could say nothing. Then he managed to blurt out:

"Do you mean that?"

"I was just as sincere as you were. I don't see why you should be so skeptical."

"Tell me what you were thinking about just then. Can you?"

"I was trying to decide; but I can't do it, though. You see, 'more' means far more, above all others, all the time. At least, that's what it means to me."

"It means that to me, too. It means towering away above anybody else, up in a separate class of one, all alone. That is where you are, to me. You do regard me that way sometimes?"

"Yes, sometimes."

He wondered whether he ought to stop asking questions. So far, it had been excellent policy. She had shown no sign of resentment or boredom. Of course, the subject might suddenly lose interest for her, and further questioning might detract from the satisfaction he had obtained. Yet something—the same impulse that had caused him to begin—seemed to compel him to keep on.

"How often do you think of me in that way?" he asked.

"I don't know exactly. I think every little while when I feel troubled and unhappy, and I look round and wonder who my real friends are—not the polite, bowing social acquaintances, but those who are really friends, who like me unselfishly, just for myself; those who would help me if I was in trouble; those on whom I feel I could rely if I called on them—those I *know* I can trust implicitly, without any doubt." She laughed shortly. "There are not many."

"And I am one?"

"I think so."

"Thank you," he said simply.

There was a pause.

"I am awfully glad to know this," Bennett went on with almost schoolboy directness. "I never knew you thought so much of me. I've often wished you did, but I've regarded it rather as a far-off ambition, to be attained only after a long-continued effort, like success in life. I thought I would have to build it up, so to speak, and keep strengthening it. I never flattered myself that you believed in me so much already."

"I thought you knew."

"How could I?"

"Why, I have always felt that way about you. I would believe you in spite of anything."

He stared at her.

"You would! Why"—he stopped and took a long breath—"why, it's—stupendous!"

There was another pause.

"So," he went on thoughtfully, "there are times when your thoughts are like that. And those are the times when you like me better than anybody else?"

"Yes, I think so. I believe you are a friend—*that* kind of a friend."

"I see." He understood. When she liked him better than anybody else it was as a friend. She was not thinking of anything more.

The impulse urged him to one final effort.

"Edith," he said, "I want to change that. It can be changed in one respect for the better. I want you to like me better than anybody else, not once in a while—not only when you are thinking those things—but *always*." He paused, and went on more slowly: "And I want you to more than like me."

"More than like you?"

"Love me. I love you, Edith. I have always loved you. There couldn't be anybody else. I had not meant to say this to you yet. I had meant to wait until I thought you could have grown to know me—and care for me—in *this* way. So I won't ask you for an answer now. It wouldn't be fair, really. You don't know yet whether you like me as a friend always more than any one else. Still less, I suppose, can you know this. But I want you to know, and I hope you will soon. And I want to help you to decide, if I can, by making you feel sure that I am worthy. I hope you will give me that chance."

She remained silent, and he went on:

"If I show you that I mean this—that it isn't simply a sentimental outburst—but a very genuine, very lasting feeling, do you think you will be able to—care for me in that way? To love me? Do you," he added gently, "do you think you could love me—enough to marry me?"

It was out. He had said it. He waited, holding his breath. His heart seemed to stand still.

Suddenly the sharp order of a military officer on the parade-ground rang out. It sounded very distant, but clear. Bennett started. The girl stirred, but still she did not speak. To Bennett it seemed as though hours had passed.

She had turned slightly away, and was looking at the ground. Her lips began to move slowly. Bennett strained every nerve, but could not catch what she said.

He stepped closer and put his hands on her shoulders, and leaned forward. At the same moment she turned and looked at him, and her face was very close to his. She was looking straight at him, her eyes meeting his frankly.

For perhaps a single moment Bennett held himself in check. Then his restraint and self-control gave way. He drew her to him until his cheek brushed hers, and held her tight. With a thrill, such as he had never before experienced, he felt her arms closing round him also.

"Could you—do you love me as much as that?"

"I—I think so," she whispered softly.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### WHAT CAME OF THE PROPHECY.

FOR a long time neither spoke. Bennett held the girl tightly, his cheek pressed against hers. Words were superfluous. It was enough to have her there close to him.

A bugle sounded. At first they did not hear it. Then it sounded again. It encored itself several times, in a steady, insistent way, which showed that it meant business.

The time had come for the review, the important function they had forgotten.

He released her slowly and very reluctantly, but not before he had seen the happiness in her eyes and known beyond all possible doubt that the whole wonderful thing was real.

They hurried back. Bennett had some misgivings as to whether his prolonged absence had been noticed. Edith was thinking of what her mother would say.

One of the first persons they met was Osgood. There had been some delay, and nothing had started yet.

"Where have you been?" Osgood asked.

"We went for a stroll," said Bennett.

It was rather abrupt, but he did not feel like saying anything more. Osgood's presence, for some reason he could not have explained even to himself, jarred on him. But then, after the great moment, almost any one's presence would have jarred on him, especially if that one had made commonplace remarks or asked obvious questions. The descent from Edith's presence to the crowd was too sharp to pass unnoticed.

Osgood's particular presence, however, had another significance. It reminded Bennett of something he had completely forgotten—the fortune-teller's prediction.

During his engrossing conversation with Edith the thing had entirely slipped his mind. Now it came back to him, and with it the recollection that he had said nothing about it to her. Still, it was a trivial thing. No wonder he had forgotten it!

But now it did not seem so trivial. It filled him with a vague foreboding. It stuck relentlessly in his mind. He could not get rid of it.

Even as he was arranging Edith's chair to secure a better view, he found himself thinking about that prediction, and unconsciously his manner became what it had been before. Not quite, perhaps, but almost. Now that he was back amid the conventions and formalities, his recently stirred emotions had to be subdued, much as one extinguishes a match by putting it into water. He seemed to be in another world, and he had to begin to fit into it.

Through force of habit he did it quickly. The spell of the great moment when Edith had whispered "I think so" began to wear off. Life became hard and cold and matter of fact and practical again.

Bennett, the lover of Edith, disappeared; and Bennett, the National Guard officer, took his place. And with the change came the disturbing recollection of the fortune-teller's prediction.

Fortunately he was prevented for a while from dwelling on it by having to go to the review and take his part in the proceedings. Bennett's was the type of mind that concentrates on the thing in hand. The doings of the next hour would require all his attention, and in a way he was glad of it.

The two men excused themselves from the ladies and hurried away. Edith settled herself in her chair to point out items of interest to her mother, and to watch with admiration the stirring scene—and particularly a stirring figure in it.

The function known as "calling off in company streets" having taken place, the review began. Company after company passed the Governor, halting and saluting with accuracy and precision. G Company, led by Osgood, executed its part in style, and its commander noticed with satisfaction that the pretty girl in the white dress in the reviewing-stand had watched it closely.

Then came H Company, Bennett's. The men moved along with impressive regularity, as their predecessors had done. It was a fine sight.

Suddenly Bennett halted, and gave the signal to salute. A gasp of amazement went over the parade-ground. What was the man thinking of? People in the rear of the stand craned their necks to see what was the matter. The colonel was visibly disturbed.

Edith looked anxiously at the head of H Company. For, instead of being level with the Governor and facing him, Bennett was still twenty feet

away. He had given the signal for salute too soon.

The company had obeyed the order in a puzzled, unnatural way. There was an awkward pause. Then their leader seemed suddenly to take in the situation. He gave another command.

A few brisk steps forward, and the company reached the right place. The salute was given, another order rang out, and the company marched on as the others had done.

But although the incident was passed over so quickly, Bennett's error had been noticed particularly by two people who counted. The first, and more important, was Edith. The other was the colonel.

Edith mentioned it to him as soon as the review was over.

"What made you stop like that?" she asked in concern, when Bennett came up, immediately after the conclusion of the proceedings.

Bennett smiled painfully.

"We all make mistakes sometimes," he replied.

"You remember what I told you," broke in Osgood, who was standing by. "It must be your eyes. They fail you at times. And don't forget the prediction this afternoon. Take my advice, old man, and have them seen to at once."

"Oh, all right," said Bennett, almost shortly, for him.

He was usually very even-tempered. Even when annoyed he could still be pleasant. Perhaps this was not so much due to great self-control as to his habit of subduing his emotions. To-day, however, was an exception. The tremendous events of the past hour had greatly moved him.

Then, as if he realized that he had been ungracious, he added: "I appreciate your thinking about it, of course. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, that's all right," said Osgood.

The girl had listened in troubled silence to this conversation. The allusion to "the prediction this afternoon" was, of course, lost upon her.

But the incident of Bennett's mistake in ordering the salute was very vivid in her memory.

A look of anxiety appeared on her face. Was there anything wrong with Bennett's sight? Womanlike, she felt worried. She made an effort to hide her feelings. On account of the suddenness of their new relation she could not manifest more than ordinary concern.

At that moment her mother got up, and suggested starting for home. The little party began to move slowly away.

Osgood adroitly managed to place himself at Edith's side.

"What did you think of it, Miss Trevor?" he asked.

"Splendid," she answered. "I enjoyed it immensely. Didn't you, mother?"

Mrs. Trevor's reply intimated that the review had given her a very pleasant afternoon.

There was a lull in the talk. They had now joined the stream of those leaving the parade-ground. Suddenly Edith noticed her mother chatting to a lady by her side. It appeared that she had found herself walking beside a friend of hers. Since Edith was well taken care of by the two men, she proposed going home with her friend. Edith approved the plan. From that moment the two older ladies were a community in themselves. Bennett, Osgood, and Edith engaged in a separate conversation.

There had been many visitors to the review, and as they were all leaving at the same time, individual progress was slow. It was just like any other audience—it had arrived in twos and threes, and was trying to leave quickly *en masse*.

The three had been performing a sort of marking-time for an appreciable period, when an orderly appeared and saluted Bennett.

"Yes?" said Bennett.

"The colonel wants to see you, sir. He is in his tent now, sir."

"All right. I'll come at once."

Bennett turned to the other two.

"I may be kept a few minutes; but, of course, I'll be back as soon as I can."

He noticed, with a feeling almost of satisfaction, the look of concern in Edith's eyes. It was splendid to know she was so much interested in him. The colonel's reprimand was well worth undergoing for one look from her like that.

"In the mean time," he added, "you will be excellently taken care of by Osgood. Wait for me at the station, won't you? Good-by. See you presently."

He followed the waiting orderly, and together they made their way to the colonel's tent.

Osgood walked on slowly with Miss Trevor. He guided her to the edge of the stream of departing visitors. Here, on one side, they would be practically alone. He wanted to talk to her.

She allowed herself to be guided. She guessed his intention. She did not entirely approve it, but he evidently wanted to say something. She wanted to hear it.

## CHAPTER V.

### OSGOOD SPEAKS.

OSGOOD said little until they were really by themselves. Then, realizing that his time was limited, he began, with an almost blunt directness:

"You and Bennett went for quite a long walk this afternoon, didn't you?"

"Yes," she answered. "We got back just in time. I am glad he wasn't late for the review."

"Well, that wouldn't have been much worse than what happened. I can't understand how he made that mistake. I have never known him to do anything like it before. It looks as though there must be something wrong with his eyesight. Did he mention anything to you about the fortune-teller?"

"What fortune-teller?"

"Then he hasn't told you. It's a curious coincidence that both things have happened on the same day. Why, just before you came we went into one of these gipsy tents on the edge of the parade-ground, and had our careers prophesied. Mine was all right. Bennett's was different. He was told that a great darkness was coming into his life."

"Well?" Edith said inquiringly.

"Well, do you remember your own prediction?"

"My prediction?" She looked at him blankly for a moment. Then she recalled it. "Oh, yes. I remember now."

"You used the very same words."

"Yes." She smiled at the recollection. "It is a coincidence, certainly, but that's all it is. I was only playing, you know."

"Still, it's curious."

"Lots of things are. What else did the fortune-teller predict?"

"Nothing much. A general dull outlook. This great darkness was the main thing. She construed it to mean that Bennett would lose his sight, not suddenly, but gradually."

The girl's face became grave.

"You don't *really* place any faith in those things, do you?"

"He doesn't. He only laughs. I do to some extent. I am sorry to say I think there may be something in this one. You see, there are several facts to support it, facts about which the prophetess could have no knowledge whatever. Bennett's told me himself about his sight being a little uncertain at times. Then there is what happened at the review this afternoon. Think of that."

"Yes."

There was a short silence.

"Your speaking of it," she said, thoughtfully, "reminds me now of something that happened the other day. I hardly noticed it at the time, but it seems more important now. I had dropped a coin from my purse. He bent over to pick it up, but he couldn't

seem to find it. He groped for it for several minutes. I was standing up, and I could see it clearly."

Osgood was serious.

"There's just another indication," he said. "These things are what make me think there really is something in the prediction. The mistake he made in the review, in particular, seems to show it. I advised him to see an oculist."

"What did he say? Is he going to do it?"

"That was before the review. He didn't seem much concerned then. He probably is now. I hope you'll use your influence to make him go to an oculist right away."

"I will, though I don't know what influence I have." She paused, and studied him closely. "I should think you, who know him better, would have more. More than anybody else. I am awfully glad you two are such friends. I think it's splendid."

Osgood smiled to himself.

"Yes, I think we get along all right," he said, "considering."

She looked at him quickly.

"Considering what?"

"Oh, nothing much."

"But what?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I want to know."

"You don't really want me to tell you?"

"Yes, I do. Please."

"Well, it's just this. Bennett and I are the best friends in the world. No one thinks more of him than I do. He is a fine fellow and we have always got on together excellently. But now there is one question which is coming up. We haven't discussed it yet, and so far it has made no difference. But I can see it will have to be considered, and it may make a difference. Perhaps soon."

"What is it?"

"You."

"I?"

"Yes."

"But I don't understand. How could I?"

"Because we both like you—more than we do other girls."

"Well?"

"Well, the question is: How do you like us?"

"I like you both very much."

"But which do you prefer?"

She hesitated.

"Don't let's talk about it," she said. "Let's talk about something else."

"But I want to know. I think you should tell me. I mean, I think it would be nice of you."

"I'd rather not."

"Why not? It means a great deal to me, more than you know, perhaps. Edith, I love you. I am crazy about you. I think about you all the time. All day—"

"Stop," she said. "You mustn't say another word."

"Why? Is it so very unwelcome?"

"No, it isn't that. I like you very much, and I want you to like me, but you mustn't talk about love."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't love you."

"Perhaps not now, but—"

"No, I could never love you. Don't say any more about it. Let's be good friends, as we have always been."

Osgood's face darkened.

"You mean that you are in love with somebody else?"

She did not answer.

"Is it that you could never love me or that you are in love with somebody else?" he persisted.

Still she did not answer.

"Is it Bennett?" he hazarded.

She faced him.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I think it may be. In fact, I think it is."

There was a pause.

"Am I right?" he went on.

"Yes, you are."

"Are you engaged to him?"

"Yes, to-day."

Osgood stared.

"Oh," he said. "Oh, I understand now. I am sorry I did not know. It would be idle and insincere for me to

pretend I am entirely glad, but I congratulate you both."

"Thank you."

"I hope you won't think me presumptuous when I say that I shall continue to think of you as I do now. I cannot change. Your preference for him does not lessen my regard. And if it should happen that you need me, you can always be sure I will be glad to be of service to you. You will accept that?"

"Yes, of course." She thanked him with her eyes. "I am sorry. But we can be just as good friends as we have been. It needn't make any difference, need it?"

"No. If you desire it so, things will be just the same."

But a close observer would not have been reassured by the expression of Osgood's face as he said it. His eyes did not meet hers. His thin lips were set close together. They had a determined, unpleasant look.

The close observer would have been right. Osgood did not intend to let things remain just the same. The news he had just learned was disquieting, but it could have been one big degree worse. She had not said anything about marriage with Bennett. There was time yet. Until she and Bennett were married there was hope.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BEFORE THE COLONEL.

MEANWHILE, Bennett was seeing the colonel.

He had followed the orderly at a rapid pace. He hoped that he would not keep him long. Now that his military duties were over, he grudged every minute spent away from Edith.

The distance to the colonel's tent was by no means short, and, quickly as he walked, it took him sufficiently long to give him time to think about one or two matters.

He was a trifle uneasy about the colonel. His mistake had been a bad

one, and he felt fairly certain that he was going to get a strong calling down.

But after all that was of minor importance compared with the wonderful fact of his having won Edith's love. This was everything. For the time he could think of nothing else. His business anxieties would claim his attention to-morrow, but that was to-morrow. For the rest of the day he wanted to be with Edith.

His thoughts were abruptly interrupted by his arrival at the colonel's tent. Deep in meditation, he had lost track of the distance, and had reached it sooner than he had expected.

He paused a moment to collect himself. It was going to be a difficult interview.

But with the orderly watching him, Bennett did not like to stand there in an attitude denoting hesitation and indecision, which might possibly be construed as humiliation or fear. He stepped inside.

As he entered, the colonel, who was reading at a small table, looked up. He did not smile and invite Bennett to seat himself. He simply looked at him. The look of scrutiny. The look of inspection. The look of unspoken criticism.

Bennett waited in silence. He was uncomfortable, and this reception did not help to put him at ease. It is never at any time an easy matter to enter a room and meet a hostile gaze from a person who is fortunate enough to be seated already. One feels awkward, out of the picture.

After a minute of stern silence the colonel spoke.

"Well?" he said.

Under such circumstances this is a hard remark to answer. There is no real answer to it. You answer it according to your personal taste.

Had he been in a frivolous mood, or had the occasion been less serious, Bennett might have replied, "Quite well, thank you." Or had he been recklessly bold, he might have said, "Well, yourself?"



As it was, he was silent for a moment or two. He vainly cast about him for a reply. The only speech he could muster consisted of two words.

"I've come," he said.

It was not a good speech. It had a sinister sound. It was the sort of speech he might have made if he had sought the colonel out to murder him. Bennett's unsettled state of mind, and his natural diffidence caused him to say it in a tone that was almost relentless. He felt this himself, and an instant later added:

"You sent for me, sir."

The colonel unfolded himself from the chair.

"Yes, I did send for you," he said. "I want to speak to you about what occurred at the review this afternoon. What did you mean by it? What is your explanation? How do you account for it?"

Bennett had expected queries, but hardly queries of such rapidity and strength and volume. He paused to collect his ideas. The colonel thought he did not intend to answer, and recommenced the attack.

"Well, what was the matter? What excuse have you got? What did you mean by it?"

"I thought I was in front of the stand, sir."

"You thought you were in front of the stand! How could you think that? Couldn't you see you were not in front of it? You were not facing the Governor at all."

"I know. I thought I was."

"But how could you? You were at least fifteen yards away. I am positive of it. At least fifteen. How could you possibly think you were facing the Governor? You were nowhere near him."

"I know," said Bennett again. "I made a mistake." He had resolved not to argue the question. As far as he could conscientiously agree with his superior officer, short of humbling himself too much, he was going to do it.

"Of course you made a mistake,"

barked the colonel, pounding the table. "I want to know why you did it. There must be a reason. Why? You *saw* the stand, didn't you?"

There was the faintest note of sarcasm in his voice.

"Yes," said Bennett steadily.

"And you saw the Governor?"

"I thought so."

The colonel surveyed him in mild surprise.

"Oh! You thought so! Then you were not sure?"

"No. If I had been *sure*, I could not have made the mistake."

The retort was effective. The colonel sat drumming his fingers on the table. He was perplexed.

"Tell me," he said more kindly, "is there anything wrong with your eyes? Or are you aware of any defect, which might account for this error?"

Bennett had been expecting something like this to come on top of the fortune-teller's prediction and Os-good's subsequent statements. By now he would not be surprised if a waiter in a restaurant, or a street-car conductor recommended him to an optician on a first glance.

It nettled him a little, and the thought of Edith waiting for him made him impatient. But he kept his head.

"Once in a while I make mistakes," he answered.

"Every one does sometimes."

The colonel's manner became less brusque, and his voice not so gruff. His anger was going, and consideration was taking its place.

"Perhaps," he said, almost pleasantly, "it is not fair to blame you. It may not be your fault at all. I had not thought of that. I had regarded it as a stupid blunder on your part. Of course if your eyesight is not entirely reliable, there is a great difference. I am inclined to believe that is so."

"It is a serious matter, though. Something should be done about it. We must see that such a thing does not happen again. I never felt so morti-

fied in my life as I did when that hitch occurred to-day. It was the one flaw in the review. You must do something about these eyes of yours."

"Yes, sir."

"Do not delay it. The matter is serious. I am speaking now not only from the point of view of your military superior, but as man to man. You must take care of yourself, Bennett. Neglect might bring disastrous consequences."

"Yes, sir."

The colonel continued his endeavor to make up for his harshness.

"You know," he went on, almost confidentially, "the pride I take in the regiment. It was most unfortunate that this happened to-day, before the Governor. I at once put it down to carelessness on your part. I am sorry I did not think of this possibility before. I am afraid I was hasty."

"That's all right, sir," Bennett assured him, thinking of Edith, and wishing he could get away. "You have been very kind. I shall bear in mind what you say."

"That's right," said the colonel, relieved. In his effort to outweigh his former curtness he said more. "Let us regard the incident as closed. I am glad we have discussed it so amicably. This is our last day of camp. Tomorrow you return to business, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Bennett, starting to edge for the door.

"How is business?"

"Pretty fair. It could be better," and Bennett edged toward the door.

"You will be glad to get back in harness, eh?"

"Yes, I think so," said Bennett on his way to the door.

Then his impatience got the better of him. He acted as though the interview was at an end, and turned to leave. As he at last reached the door, the colonel spoke again.

"Don't forget," he reminded him, "what I said about the danger of delay. I have known people to ruin their

eyesight by neglecting it. Don't make that mistake, Bennett. See an oculist just as soon as you can."

"I will," said Bennett, and slipped out to escape further reminders.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIRST STEP.

BENNETT hurried away. He had no idea how long he had been with the colonel, but he knew it was long enough for Edith and Osgood to have gone a considerable distance. Considering the start they had, he doubted whether he would overtake them before they reached the station.

He rushed across the parade-ground and found them waiting for him on the platform.

His face had been grave and set as he hastened along, for the colonel's words had taken root; but, on catching sight of Edith, it lit up. Osgood noticed this, and also the corresponding look on her face. He swore softly to himself.

"Hello!" said Bennett, looking round. "Where's your mother?"

Edith explained.

"Oh, I see!" he said. "How about tickets, Osgood?"

"I've got them right here. How did you get on with the colonel?"

"Oh, pretty well. We chatted."

"What did he say?"

"Many things. The gist of which were that I shouldn't have made that mistake—rather an obvious fact—and that, since it was not due to incompetence, I would better investigate my eyesight, and so on."

"There you are!" exclaimed Osgood triumphantly. "That's just what I told you."

"You were very right," assented Bennett.

He turned to assist Edith into the train, which had just pulled in. Once aboard, he sat down beside her, leaving Osgood to occupy the seat opposite. Once the train had started, Osgood

mentioned the fortune-teller's prediction, and referred again to Miss Trevor's prophecy of two years previous.

"How did the colonel end up?" she inquired. "Was he angry?"

"Oh, no! He was very pleasant. We got to talking about other things. It was all I could do to get away. I positively had to cut him short and run."

"You were lucky," said Osgood. "This eye business saved you."

There was a silence, and when the conversation was renewed it was on a different topic. An animated discussion of baseball occupied them until the train arrived at its destination.

The three walked slowly out of the station together. Then Bennett paused. It was Osgood's cue. Knowing what he had learned that afternoon, he realized the situation, and did not delay his departure. He looked rather hard at Edith for a moment, so hard that she flushed a little and, telling Bennett he would see him in the morning, turned away. They watched his graceful figure disappear in the whirl of traffic, and then went on down the street, her arm very close and tight against his.

"Won't you come in for a few minutes, Mr. Bennett?" she said, for the benefit of the servant, when they reached the house.

He went in, and she took him to the library. Here they were away from everybody. He waited until she was seated, and then put himself in a big armchair opposite her. For some time they sat facing each other, saying nothing, but each giving the other the same look—the look of love.

Suddenly he spoke.

"You haven't any faith in fortune-telling and all that sort of thing, have you?" he said.

"No," she answered.

Yet she shivered slightly, although the room was quite warm. He noticed the movement, but said nothing.

"That sort of mistake won't happen again, dear," he said.

"I do hope not. You'll go to an oculist, won't you? I'm—I'm a little afraid, after what occurred this afternoon."

"Of course I will. But don't worry about it, dear. I'm all right. I hope Osgood hasn't frightened you. What did he say to you while you two walked up to the station?"

"He told me about the fortune-teller, and seemed greatly concerned about your eyes, and I told him how glad I was that you two were such good friends, and he said you had been up till now; but—well, and then he told me he loved me."

"What?"

"Yes. I told him it was impossible. He pressed me for an answer, and then I told him about you."

"So he knows."

"Yes. He knows and understands, and"—she smiled—"it finished rather well, with the understanding that we're going to be perfectly good friends."

"That's good," said Bennett quietly.

"Yes, I'm glad there isn't going to be any change—between you two especially."

"Yes," murmured Bennett thoughtfully.

"Because," she added, "that would have—well, it would have spoiled things. As it is, everything is perfect. Perfect," she repeated dreamily.

"Yes," he said, drawing closer; "perfect."

Osgood, meanwhile, had gone straight to his club. Immediately on his arrival he asked for a Dr. Walling.

It appeared that Dr. Walling was somewhere about, but no one knew exactly where. Osgood impatiently requested that he be paged. The page started off.

Walling was an old school friend of Osgood's, and an oculist of growing reputation. It is customary to speak of old school friends as "of growing reputation," but Walling really was entitled to the description. He was moving up, pushing to the front.

The page located him in the smoking-room. Osgood found him there a minute later. He was smoking a pipe and reading the evening paper. On seeing Osgood he got up.

"Why, hello, Osgood! What brings you here? Haven't seen you for a long time."

"No. I suppose you've been pretty busy, too?"

"Very," said the other, drawing up another chair. "Sit down, Osgood. Yes, I've been busy, all right. The days whirl by. In a way, I'm very thankful for it. I might be doing little or nothing."

"I suppose many are."

"You bet they are. I seem to have got started much quicker than the average. And, so far, things have kept up excellently."

He continued to chat in the same strain. Osgood, with his usual tact and diplomacy, listened with a rapt expression. He listened for about ten minutes. Then his impatience got the better of him, and he abandoned finesse.

He became direct and forceful. There was a slight lull in the conversation, and, instead of supplying another lead, he plunged into the matter that was uppermost in his mind.

"Walling," he said, "I came to see you about something particular. It is important. Can we get by ourselves?"

"Certainly. We'll go over into that corner. There isn't anybody within yards."

The two men got up and went into the corner. Walling ordered drinks and cigars, and settled himself back in his seat.

Although they had been friends at college, the two had seen little of each other since; and, except for nods and casual remarks when they ran across each other at the club, of which Walling was a new member, they had not often come into contact. Walling was curious now as to the nature of Osgood's business with him.

He was not long kept in doubt. Osgood waited until the waiter brought

the order and had gone again. Then he narrated the day's happenings.

He mentioned the coincidence of the two predictions about Bennett—the remarks Bennett himself had made and Miss Trevor's recalling the incident of the coin. Finally he told about the salute error.

Walling listened attentively.

"I am sorry to hear this," he said, when Osgood had finished. "It sounds bad. Still, there may not be so much wrong with him as it would seem. These things can sometimes be explained by a stretch of coincidence."

"I don't see how you're going to explain this sequence of events," rejoined Osgood.

"You don't? It can be done."

"Go ahead."

"All right. In the first place, the girl's prophecy was simply fun. It means nothing. Then the old gipsy's to-day was the usual junk, perhaps with an extra touch of gloom."

Osgood's mouth curled doubtfully.

"Oh, I know you believe in them," went on Walling; "but more often than not they're fakes, just the same. Well, to proceed. Bennett's groping for the coin could easily have been due to the fact that he didn't happen to catch sight of it at once. A man with perfect eyes might do a thing like that several times in a day."

"Curious that the girl could see it when she was much farther back," suggested Osgood.

"Not at all. The actual distance from the object cuts little figure. The point is that the person fails completely to locate it. It is a phenomenon which frightens a great many people. Often they come to me greatly frightened, and with the idea that their sight is going. I reassure them by telling them what Dr. W. B. Cannon said in a lecture at the Harvard Medical School. I've repeated it so many times that I know it rather well now. The idea is this:

"The spot at which the optic nerve is attached to the eye is a blind spot

in the eye—the only blind spot, in fact, in the normal eye. A curious thing in connection with this blind spot is that if we shut one eye and look at an object—a person, for example—so as to get that object in the blind spot, we cannot see that object. Thus we may behead our friends, visually.

"So it is very probable that Bennett had one eye nearly closed, and simply didn't see the coin with the other, on account of this perfectly normal blind spot."

Osgood was silent for a moment.

"But how about the mistake he made in giving the order for the salute?"

"Yes," said Walling, knocking the ash off his cigar and becoming thoughtful, "that is a serious piece of evidence—the one piece, but serious. I don't know just how to account for it."

"Neither do I."

"How does Bennett himself?"

"He doesn't. He said very little on the subject. We didn't discuss it much then because the girl was there, and I haven't seen him since. I left them just now at the station. He has taken her home."

"I see. Well, what does Bennett think about the prediction?"

"He only scoffs. He doesn't take any stock in fortune-telling, anyway."

"Then he doesn't connect the prediction with his mistake in the review?"

"No, not yet. I don't really know what he thinks, because I haven't seen him alone. The colonel said something to him, but Bennett passed it off lightly in the train. He was in a good humor then."

"Hadh't he been before?"

"Not in the morning. He was quiet and moody. But he had a visitor for the review—this girl I told you about—and that brightened him. Directly she came he forgot all about the prediction, and even the colonel's calling down didn't seem to affect him much. At least, at the time. Still, the mistake he made must have shown him that *something* is wrong. When he

gets by himself to-night and looks back over the day, he is bound to realize what has happened, and how serious and significant it is."

"Bring him to see me."

"I will if I can."

"We must correct any trouble before it gets worse. And I'd like to see Bennett again, anyhow. I haven't seen him for ages. I've often wondered how he was getting on, and wanted to get in touch with him. So, the sooner he comes the better."

Osgood was inspecting his glass with care.

"You'll give him a straight report, won't you? I mean, you'll be absolutely frank. Tell him the truth right out. Don't let there be any smoothing over or sugar-coating. Don't let him go along thinking he's all right if he isn't, will you?"

"No, of course not. I wouldn't want to lull him into feeling secure and safe when I knew him to be in danger. I might 'kid along' an old lady, but not a man like Bennett. Don't worry about my end of it. I shall give him an absolutely straight report, good or bad."

"That's the idea exactly."

There was a pause.

"Say," remarked Walling, at length, "you're taking a lot of interest in Bennett, aren't you?"

Osgood leaned forward. He meant to play a bold bluff.

"Well, you see, we're friends. That's one thing. Another is that I'm thinking of his *fiancée*."

Which was true. Osgood was thinking of Bennett's *fiancée*, but not in the unselfish way one would have supposed from what he was saying.

"Why," said Walling, in surprise, "is he engaged?"

"Yes, to this girl who was up there to-day. Keep the news to yourself, understand. Now, those predictions bothered me a little, and since Bennett made that huge blunder in the review I have been worried about him—and her. I want to have him see you, and

you to attend to him and see that his eyes are in good shape. You understand?"

"For her sake, eh?"

"For both their sakes—hers as well as his. I hope to remain a friend of the family." He looked away.

Walling was touched.

"I understand," he said sympathetically. "And I'm glad you're after Bennett to have the matter attended to."

"Yes, I want to hear your decision as soon as possible."

"My decision?"

"Well, your opinion as to how much there is wrong, and the best method of treatment, and so on," said Osgood, a little hastily.

He got up.

"Well, I must be going. When shall I see you?"

"As soon as you like—when you

bring Bennett in. I should get hold of him to-morrow, if I were you."

"I will. I'll see him first thing, and, if it's humanly possible, get him to come. I hope you won't be too busy."

"I'll squeeze in an appointment with Bennett at any time."

"Good. Together, we ought to clear up his difficulty, oughtn't we?" and Osgood smiled.

"Yes, indeed. Well, good-by. See you to-morrow."

"Hope so. Good-by."

Osgood left. Walling watched him thread his way through the smoking-room and out at the door opposite. Then he sat down. He picked up his paper slowly, but he did not read it long. After a few minutes he laid it aside, and looked at the door opposite doubtfully.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "what little game that fellow's up to?"

*(To be continued.)*

# One Crowded Christmas



by  
**Douglas  
Pierce**

**I**T was just midnight when Frank Swanson let himself into the house.

All over the city bells and whistles were stridently proclaiming the arrival of Christmas morning, and from a church spire on the corner below the chimes were sweetly playing, "Oh, little town of Bethlehem!"

Swanson himself, as he came down the street, had been full of the Christ-

mas spirit of "peace on earth, goodwill toward man," his step light, his head thrown back, his heart beating in tune to the exultant pealing of the bells.

But, as he entered the gloomy, old mansion, a shadow seemed to fall upon his joyous mood. From under the library door streamed a line of light into the darkened hallway, showing that his father was still up; and

Frank realized that he might as well beard the lion then and there and have it over with, for he hardly expected what he had to tell would be received with perfect equanimity.

An interview with the "governor"! It is always an ordeal to be faced with reluctance from the early days of the wood-shed to those more mature ones when college bills or escapades have to be haltingly explained; and young Swanson now, in spite of his twenty-four years and assumption of full-fledged independence, had to confess to some of the old feeling of timidity and heart-sinking at the prospect.

He hesitated a moment with his hand on the knob, battling against an impulse to put off the telling until another time; then, nerving himself to the inevitable, he opened the door and entered.

"Merry Christmas, dad," he saluted with a hollow semblance of joviality.

Swanson *père* did not even look up from the papers on which he was engrossed.

"Humph!" was his only response.

For a full minute there was silence, the young man searching his brain for a diplomatic opening, the elder seemingly oblivious to his presence.

Then the old gentleman, with one of those almost uncanny flashes of perception which had made him such a terror to his competitors, suddenly raised his head and transfixed Frank with a sarcastic glance.

"You have come to inform me that you are thinking of getting married, eh?" he demanded.

At this accurate reading of his purpose Frank could only flush and stammer in surprise.

"And you are going to tell me, too, no doubt," pursued the old man, "that she is the dearest, sweetest, noblest creature in the world, and that, with her as the guiding star of your life, you cannot fail to settle down and make a tremendous success of yourself?"

It was exactly what Frank had had

in mind to say, although probably with more fervor of expression.

"Well," the father went on dryly, "we'll consider all that said, and your promises of good behavior accepted at par, or by pa." He smiled a trifle grimly at his own wit. "And now let's get down to the practical aspect of the matter. How are you going to provide for this young woman you have asked to share your life, until all these castles in the air crystallize into something more substantial?"

"I do not ask to know the name of your *fiancée*." The old fellow made a gesture of indifference. "I am willing to concede that she is a paragon and a *peri*. But, since I take it for granted that you propose to supply her with clothes, food, a roof to cover her, and a certain amount of social diversion, I am a little curious to learn how you expect to do it on a salary of eight hundred dollars a year?"

Frank started to speak, but checked himself and remained silent.

"I'll tell you," the other answered his own question. "You expect me to give you a raise." He paused and surveyed his son with a slightly quizzical air. "Why, my dear boy, don't you know you're not worth eight hundred dollars, or anything like it? I could get plenty of men to do your work, and do it even more acceptably at half the figure. I pay you that just as I give you free board and lodging here in my house, simply on account of our relationship, not as a return for any service you render. So now, if you think you stand any show of getting an advance in salary out of me, go ahead, and put in your request."

Again the old man had shrewdly called the turn on his son's intentions; but, in the face of so brutally candid an exposition, what could Frank say?

"Nellie and I can wait," he muttered defiantly. "I'll be making more than that some day."

"Yes." His father's lips once more twisted into that thin, skeptical smile. "Perhaps in ten years or so you'll

really be worth eight hundred dollars a year to me."

Frank threw back his head at the taunt, and an angry light glittered in his eye. Yet he could not deny the justice of it. He knew himself—none better—that he had devoted a good deal more thought to his athletics and clothes and pastimes than he had to business. These and "Nellie" had been his chief concern in life; the office a secondary consideration.

Still, no young man of spirit likes to be told that he is an incompetent, a mere drag on the machine; and all Frank's soul rose in hot rebellion.

"I'll show you!" he burst out stormily. "You'll find out whether I'm such a dub or not, and I won't ask any favors of you while I'm proving it. Get one of those half-price men to fill my place, because I'm quitting you right now—free board and all—and I won't show up again until I've made good."

And with this as a valedictory, he snatched up his hat, and, in high dudgeon at the treatment which had been accorded him, soon left the parental roof behind him.

He had no idea what he was going to do, or where he was going to go, and as his first indignation cooled down he halted under a lamp-post to consider these rather important points.

Then, as he rammed his hand carelessly into his pocket, he suddenly awoke to the fact that he had only a trifle over three dollars to his name.

Always used to having all his needs supplied, he had never given a thought to finances when he so heedlessly cut loose from his moorings; and, now that he realized how nearly he faced actual destitution, he was for the moment appalled.

Only for the moment, however. Almost immediately the easy optimism of youth asserted itself.

"What's the odds?" he muttered. "Three dollars will buy me my night's lodging and breakfast, and I'll get hold of a job of some kind in the morning."

On second thought, though, he decided that possibly three dollars for bed and breakfast was a bit extravagant for a man in his circumstances, and that it might be prudent to conserve his capital by patronizing one of the cheaper hosteleries.

But, as a gilded youth about town, his acquaintance with such places was limited; and, as he was trying to recall a suitable one, his meditations were interrupted by a small voice arising from somewhere about his knee.

"I'm losted!" it piped up plaintively. "Won't you please take me home?"

Frank looked down to see a sturdy little chap, who, despite a face tear-stained and begrimed, showed by his clothes and general air of breeding that he most emphatically did not belong in the rather slumlike neighborhood whither Swanson in his absorption had wandered.

"Losted?" Swanson caught the kiddy up in his arms. "Well, I should say you must be, down here at this end of town at half past one o'clock in the morning. What's your name, captain?"

"Robert Anderson McNutt, Jr.," promptly replied the boy.

"And where do you live?"

But on this point the child was vague. All he could furnish was a rather hazy description of a house with stone lions on either side of the doorstep.

Swanson, after probing him at some length, and eliciting nothing more satisfactory, was confirmed in his first opinion that all he could do in the case was to turn the child over to the police; but when he mentioned this solution the boy cried and clung to him so piteously that he could not find it in his heart to do it.

Then, by a flash of intuition almost worthy of his father, he found an answer to the problem.

Some months before he remembered a lawyer by the name of McNutt had ordered a heating-plant from Swan-



son & Co. for a new house then in course of construction.

"Robert A. McNutt it was," Frank nodded, recalling the entries he had made on the books of the firm, "and consequently it stands to reason that Robert Anderson McNutt, Jr., must be his son. Now, let's see, where was that house he was putting up? Oh, yes, I remember, No. 69 Grenadine Terrace. Or, come to think of it, wasn't it 96? Still that makes no difference. Grenadine Terrace isn't much more than two or three blocks long, and the kid here is sure to spot his home, if he once sets eyes on it. The only thing I've got to do is get him out there."

But with that he halted abruptly, confronted by a new complication.

The locality he spoke of was a new fashionable subdivision remote from trolley lines, and so far distant as to make any thought of walking thither with the tired-out child a practical impossibility.

The only feasible means of getting there, indeed, was by taxicab, and it didn't require much arithmetic to figure that the ride would just about exhaust his three dollars.

If Frank hesitated, though, it was not for long.

"I want to go home," wailed the weary boy in his arms. "Santa Claus is coming to our house, and if he don't find me there maybe he'll go 'way again, and not leave anything."

"Never you fret about Santa, old man," Swanson assured him. "You and I are going to beat him to it."

And shouldering the child, he lost no time in hunting up a cab and clambering aboard.

"Three bucks will surely get me out there," was the way his reflections ran; "and as for getting back, my legs are good, while if no other bed offers, a park bench is always available."

So, dismissing his own difficulties with light-hearted philosophy, he set himself to trying to discover how his little companion had strayed so far away from home.

But Robert Anderson McNutt, Jr., by this time was strongly disposed to slumber, and beyond imparting the fact that he had gone away with a strange lady to find Santa's reindeers, and that he had run out of a cellar when a black-mustached man had forgot and left the door open, Swanson was able to gather but little from his confused narrative. Indeed, before they had covered half the distance, his answers ceased altogether, and he was sound asleep with his head pillowed on Frank's shoulder.

So they arrived at 69 Grenadine Terrace, and, as the cab halted, Swanson gazed up rather doubtfully at the house, a bit taken aback to find it all dark. If this were the place, surely there would be more signs of excitement apparent; yet he was almost positive that No. 69 was the residence to which the heating apparatus had been delivered.

He determined, at any rate, to make inquiries, rather than needlessly arouse the sleeping boy, and therefore mounted the steps and gave a vigorous pull at the bell.

He was confident as he stood there that he could hear some one moving around inside; but it was only after a long delay and repeated ringing that the door was opened a crack or two, and a man's face thrust cautiously out.

"Does Mr. McNutt, the lawyer, live here?" inquired Swanson.

The other surveyed him suspiciously. "What do you want with him?" he countered.

"I have his little son down here in my cab, and—"

But he got no further. With an excited exclamation the man rushed past him down to the vehicle, and, lifting out the still sleeping child, bore him up the steps and into the house.

The door was slammed in Frank's face, and the latter, after lingering on the stoop a minute or two, decided that he must have been forgotten, and returned to the curb to pay off his waiting chauffeur.

The meter registered just ten cents more than the entire amount in Swan-

son's pocket, and while he and the driver were acrimoniously arguing the discrepancy, the occupant of 69 again appeared on the scene, this time carrying a heavy suit-case.

"I do not know how I can thank you," he exclaimed effusively, "in returning Robert to us, Mr. —"

"Swanson," supplied Frank. "Swanson & Co., you will no doubt remember, put in the heating plant at your house?"

"Ah, yes. Surely. And as I was about to say, Mr. Swanson, in returning Robert you have rendered us a service which neither I nor the boy's mother will ever forget. Mrs. McNutt just now is still suffering from the shock occasioned by the lad's disappearance; but his restoration has already done much for her, and as soon as she completely recovers, she wants to meet you and thank—"

"But why are you dismissing your taxi?" he interrupted himself sharply, for the chauffeur, seeing no chance of getting the disputed dime, was starting off. "You do not live out this way, do you?"

"No. I simply decided that I would walk back."

"Walk back?" The other stared at him. "Why, man alive! It is a good ten miles, and most of the way you would have to plow knee-deep through snow and slush."

"Well, to tell you the truth," Frank was finally driven to confession, "I haven't the money to pay for it."

"Ah, that changes the complexion of things. But there was really no cause for you to worry on that score. I have to go to the city at once myself, and was just about to ask if I might not preempt your taxi and take you along as my guest. Come, get aboard, won't you, and we'll talk over matters going in?"

In the mean time he had called back the departing chauffeur, and as Frank was nothing loath to accept the invitation extended, the two were soon flying cityward over the muddy roads.

The lawyer proved to be a clever cross-examiner, and it was not long before he had drawn from Swanson, if not the full details, at least enough to let him guess pretty accurately just what were the young fellow's circumstances.

So much learned, he leaned over and laid a hand confidentially on Frank's knee.

"Now, look here, Swanson," he said. "I am not going to insult you by offering you either directly or indirectly any money reward for what you have done; but you have shown yourself in this affair a chap of ingenuity and resource, and since, moreover, you are out of employment, as you tell me, I am going to ask you if you are open to a business proposal, for which extra high remuneration will be paid. Although strictly honorable, it is of a delicate and perhaps dangerous character."

"You spoke of remuneration," Frank returned practically. "Just how much is there in it?"

"Well, say, five thousand dollars."

"Lead me to that proposition."

"Listen, then, and I will explain. You may have wondered at the guarded way in which you were received at my house to-night, but you will realize the necessity of it when I tell you that I am the target for a band of the craftiest and most unscrupulous blackmailers in the country. They will stop at nothing, not even murder, to gain their ends. Indeed, the attempted abduction of my little son this afternoon was only another effort on their part to terrorize me and make me yield to their demands."

"But what are they after? What is their object?" questioned Frank.

"They know that I either have received, or am about to receive a very large sum of money—to be exact, \$52,000—all in currency, and entirely in \$1,000 bills; and it is only this uncertainty on their part as to the receipt of the money which gives me any safety. If they thought I had it, my

life would not be worth a moment's purchase.

"Now I am going to trust you, Swanson; I have the \$52,000 now in my possession, but in its present shape it is absolutely valueless to me. I am shadowed and spied upon every move I make, and if I were to attempt to pass one of those \$1,000 bills, I would have the pack on me like wolves. I want to get away from this thralldom. I have plans all laid, whereby I can escape to a safe place with my wife and child; but I need money to accomplish it, and, as I say, it would be equivalent to my death-warrant even to show one of the bills.

"You can break them, though, into currency of more convenient denominations. You are discreet and tactful, and all you would have to do would be to go about from place to place changing them until the job was done. As the son of old Otto Swanson, nobody would question you for a second."

"But why don't you simply take your money to a bank and have it exchanged there?" Frank asked.

"I tell you I am watched every moment. Besides, bank clerks sometimes talk, and even in the largest institutions the showing of fifty-two \$1,000 bills by an unknown man is apt to cause comment. You must avoid that danger, too. Change the bills separately for me, at different places, and in an ordinary, casual fashion."

"But if you are watched, as you claim, why will I not be shadowed, too?"

"Ah, that is just the point. Owing to your late and unforeseen coming, and the fact that they believed me safely housed for the night, I have managed to elude their spies on this one occasion. And now tell me, will you or will you not render me this service? I will pay you, as I said, \$5,000 for your assistance, and allow you, in addition, \$1,000 to spend in getting the bills broken. Come, is it a bargain?"

But Frank had still one more question he wanted to put.

"Where did this money come from?" he asked.

"That I must decline to tell you." The lawyer returned his searching gaze without the quiver of a muscle. "You must take my word for it that it was made by honest toil, and comes to me in legitimate fashion."

Swanson was satisfied. "I'm your man," he said. "Where's the money?"

"Right here." The other lifted the suit-case from the floor and pressed the handle into the young fellow's hand.

"Now," he said hurriedly, as they drew up in front of a big terminal station, "it is better that we should separate. Come here to-morrow at the same hour and wait for me in a taxicab with the changed money. And, remember, Swanson, I am trusting everything to you."

Then, with a parting grip of the hand, he was gone.

Frank drove on across town to a big pretentious hotel, and registered. No longer did he have to consider the comparative merits of cheap lodging-houses, or "beef and" joints. With \$5,000 as good as in his hand, he was already in a fair way to achieve the shining success he had promised to show his cynical sire.

Still, it must be admitted that the responsibility of the suit-case was more or less of a care to him. He placed it under his pillow for security; but even then he did not dare close his eyes until broad daylight, and as a consequence he slept late into the morning, with the result that when he did arise he felt it obligatory to hustle out at once on his mission without stopping for breakfast or a peep at the morning paper.

He had small reason to complain of his success, however, when he did get started. One of the yellow certificates he put through at the hotel, and another at a big rival caravansary across the street. With a third and fourth he paid up his bills at two tailoring establishments, and, on the strength of his prospective windfall, ordered at each several new suits of clothes.

Various other creditors reduced his burden of one-thousand dollar bills in exchange for a settlement of their accounts; so by noon his tally showed that he had got rid of twelve, and, well satisfied with this as the result of an hour's work, he decided to return to the hotel for luncheon. But he had no sooner ordered his elaborate repast than his appetite departed; for on opening a paper his eye caught the flaring head-lines covering an account of the kidnaping of Robert Anderson McNutt, Jr. Strangely enough, no mention was made of the boy's return, but the article told of a note received only that morning demanding a ransom of fifty thousand dollars from the distracted parents.

What did it mean? Had the paper made a mistake, or was this news only a stall on the part of the lawyer to put his enemies off the track?

But, as he glanced bewilderingly up, Frank got another jolt, for over by the door stood a heavy-set man whom he recognized as one of the city detectives. With him was the taxicab-driver of the night before, evidently pointing out Frank to the officer.

The latter beckoned imperatively, and Swanson, luncheonless, had to arise and obey the behest.

"Come quietly now, and don't raise a fuss," the detective advised, dropping a hand on his shoulder. "You're wanted on this McNutt kidnaping case, and the best thing you can do is to make a clean breast, and tell us where the kid is, and who are your pals."

Frank accepted at least a part of this as good advice, and on his arrival at the police station did make a clean breast of his entire connection with the matter, telling his story so straight and with such evident sincerity that he carried conviction even to the skeptical policemen, especially as his account was corroborated in the main by the testimony of the chauffeur.

The only part he left out was the later transaction in regard to the one-

thousand-dollar bills, and that he felt was not his secret. Nor could he yet believe that his benefactor was a crook and kidnaper. If that were so, why should he give over to a stranger a fortune, knowing that the next day would certainly bring exposure of his real character?

It was all very puzzling, he had to admit, yet he was confident that in the end his new-found acquaintance would turn out to be all right.

"Where you made your mistake," observed the captain, who was quizzing him, "that is, if mistake it was, and you're on the level, was in taking the kid to 69 Grenadine Terrace. McNutt lives at 169."

"Then, what is at 69?" demanded Frank quickly.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. "Only a vacant house now," he said. The gang moved out before daylight this morning. You see, it was a plant the kidnapers had fixed up for the purpose of bagging the boy; and when the poor little chap managed by luck to escape from the cellar down here in the slums where they'd taken him, you, you big boob, with your bum memory, landed him right back in their hands. The houses on that terrace all have lions on their stoops. It sounds most too foolish to be true, I'll confess; but judging from your general make-up I guess we'll have to let it go at that. I've phoned your father, and he says he'll be responsible for your appearance in case we want you; so get along with you now, and the next time you run into something don't try to butt in on the work of the police."

Even yet, though, Swanson could not square up this seeming criminality with the actions of the man who had handed him over the fifty-two thousand dollars. So certain was he, indeed, that everything would ultimately be satisfactorily explained that he did not even resent the scathing sarcasm of the police captain.

Vainly he sought for a rational solution as he walked away from the

station-house; but instead of finding one, it fell upon him, so to speak. For as he turned a corner, two or three blocks below, he was suddenly roused from his brown study to be clutched by a couple of wildly gesticulating tailors, and to feel once more the heavy hand of the law on his shoulder.

"Robber! Thief!" shrieked the tailors. "Give us back our money!"

"Come on with me," said the authoritative voice of the law. "You're wanted for passing phoney thousand-dollar certificates."

"Phoney?" gasped Swanson, and almost fainted. The answer to the riddle was now only too plain.

At the station-house, also, he found other accusers to denounce him—two hotel managers, a haberdasher, a florist, in fact the entire ten. And the worst of it was that he did not have enough left by nearly twelve hundred dollars to make good.

Scant shrift was given him this time, nor was any attention paid to his pleas of innocence.

He was registered, recorded, and just about to be hustled off to the Bertillon room for measurement when another detective entered with a fresh prisoner.

"Sligo Jack," the officer announced with pride to the lieutenant at the desk, "king of queer shovers; but I've got him this time on another charge. He's at the bottom of the McNutt kidnapping, which we've just managed to clear up and restore the kid to its mother."

Swanson, however, did not wait for all this. Breaking loose from his cap-

tors, he flung himself across the room, and was now shaking his fist vigorously under the fellow's nose.

"You villain!" he panted. "You are responsible for all my trouble."

Sligo Jack turned with a grin to the circle of cops.

"Boys," he said, "you've got me right, and it's no use to hold out. Take it from me, though, this kid is on the square. I thought maybe I could pull off a deal through him, and that's all there is to it. He's such a mutt, you know, I simply couldn't help handing it to him."

And that to Swanson was perhaps the bitterest blow of all.

Penitently he returned that night to the parental roof, and he ate fatted calf, or rather roast turkey, with a chastened and humiliated spirit.

"Dad," he said, "I guess you're right. I'm not worth four hundred dollars a year to you; but if you take me back to work at that figure I'll try to earn it."

"No," said his father. "I've been thinking over this matter, too, and I've decided what you need is a wife to take care of you; so I'm going to raise you to two thousand five hundred dollars, and let you marry as soon as you please."

The son was quiet a moment, almost stunned by this unexpected turn of luck. Then he looked up with a slow smile.

"Dad," he said, "I'm going to have Robert Anderson McNutt, Jr., for my best man at the wedding. This is all due to him. It sure has been a crowded Christmas."

### THE WAY TO THE STARS.

I'VE talked with Wo, and in my deep distress  
Have learned from her the way to happiness.  
With Failure I've communed, and in her frown  
Have read how those who strive may win the crown;  
And face to face with Sin, deep in her eyes  
I've glimpsed the hint that leads to paradise!

*Blakeney Gray.*

# Flirting with Desperate Hazard

by  
R.K. Thompson

An illustration of a man in a dark suit and hat, carrying a briefcase, walking past a jail cell window. The window has vertical bars and is set in a stone wall. The man is walking away from the window, and his shadow is cast on the ground.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

LATE one Tuesday night there is great excitement in the office of the *Minneapolis Meteor*, about to go to press, as it is discovered that no crime has been committed in town. This means that the paper loses out on the three-year contract of Steinenbaum Brothers, who stipulate that their department-store announcement must be run next to this sort of reading-matter. Brennand, the city editor, is eager to get to press; Hopkinson, the advertising manager, declares that it is as much as his job is worth to lose that ad., and in the emergency, Lewis, reporter, undertakes to turn up a murder which shall get them out of the scrape and escape all chance of being detected as a fake.

Getting a theatrical troupe leaving town that night in a motor to help him, he shoots a blank cartridge at a man in full view of some two hundred people in the public square. The body is hastily snatched up by the confederates in the motor, who all take train to New York. Lewis makes the mistake of using in his story the name of an old-time boyhood enemy of his—John S. Perkins—as the man who is shot, and Inspector Flinch, late of Scotland Yard, whom he has lately interviewed, pieces this fact with one of Lewis's gloves he has picked up in the square, and bears him off to the lockup, after Lewis has made a desperate break to escape arrest in the city-room.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

**T**HERE is nothing else for it. Lewis turned a despairing look over his shoulder and met the gaze of the editor, standing up behind his desk. Brennand raised one hand and laid his finger on his lips. Accompanying the gesture there was a look of almost pleading inquiry, easy to read and interpret, in the editor's eyes.

Answering the look and gesture,

Lewis hopelessly shrugged, then nodded. A rude jerk pulled him around. "Come on!" growled the sergeant on his left.

The man glowered at him vindictively, his face still purple from the shock of the reporter's rash attack, whose brunt he had borne alone.

"Ye'll be tryin' some new dodge here in a minute—and I'll pay ye up for that butt ye gave me just now, me lad, a little later on. Ye'll be sorry for it, mark what I'm sayin'. Git along wid ye, now!"

Began November ARGOSY. Back numbers for sale at this office.

Between his two captors Lewis started to "march." The trio moved toward the door amid an awed hush which had fallen on the city room.

Although he realized to what a ridiculous extent he was innocent of the charge on which his arrest had been brought about, the reporter could not help reddening at the idea of being led, a prisoner literally in chains, past the silent crowd of his fellows in the office.

What would they think of him? How, later on, could he ever explain the trivial predicament which was responsible for his present plight—set himself straight in their eyes, without breaking his word, and divulging the secret that belonged solely to the *Meteor*?

And here—they were at the door leading out into the reception room now.

Perhaps the place was full. Goodness only knew how many pairs of eyes would be trained on him, a handcuffed captive, as he was guided through that outer room. Somebody he knew might be waiting there—

"Git along!" the sergeant snarled, emphasizing the order by a vicious twist of his arm, as the reporter hesitated a fraction of a second before the door. "Don't try to start anything now. Better come quiet, an' not pile up no more trouble fer yerself than's comin' to ye already!"

Lewis flatly balked.

"Look here!" he flared at the copper, then turned and aimed his appeal, in a less belligerent tone at the detective on his right—"Inspector! These handcuffs aren't at all necessary, you know. I've decided to go along with you to the station-house, and prove my innocence—"

"Then come on," the other cut him off, "and let's have no more talk about it."

"But I don't like to go this way!" the reporter protested. "I'm perfectly willing to walk with you to any

jail you name, and go along without the least fuss, only—take these confounded bracelets off my hands, and save me the disgrace—"

"Go on!" repeated the sergeant, throwing open the door. "Ye'd better not do any more gassin', or we'll gag ye. Then ye'll be disgraced a divil of a lot more'n what ye are!"

The reception-room was deserted, as it happened. Lewis, as he stepped into it, gave a sigh of relief as his eye swept the row of empty seats against the wall.

His captors had no need to hurry him now. Before anybody came into the place, as at any moment a caller or two might, Lewis was anxious to get out. He went across the room between his guards, and out through the door to the hall where the elevators were, almost at a run.

"Tryin' to break away again, are ye!" puffed Sergeant O'Malley, hanging to his elbow. "Oh, ye're the spirited one, ain't ye—yes, indeed. Well, we'll break that same spirit for ye, me laddy-buck! Wait an' see. Just wait till ye're safe in the lockup, an' then—"

"Inspector, can't you take these things off?" Lewis pleaded. "I give you my word they aren't necessary. I'll agree to go with you as meek as a lamb, if you'll free my hands, unlock these ornaments and put them away. I swear I won't try to escape, even if the chance offers, just so you'll remove these—these idiotic relics of the Spanish Inquisition!"

Inspector Flinch had placed his finger on the bell to summon one of the elevators.

And already Lewis could see himself in that car, perhaps with a half-dozen people, some of whom might know him, but every one certain to be deeply interested in a man, handcuffed and in the custody of two plain-clothes men, on his way to jail! Why, who wouldn't stare at a sight like that?

Instinctively he doubled his arms, pressing his wrists together flat against

his waist, trying to hide the twin bands of steel and their small connecting chain up his sleeves.

A faint tinkle—what was that?

His heart leaped. Could—could it be that the things had come unlocked? In some way were the handcuffs loose as he stood there? Was it possible for him to slip them off undetected, and then—but instantly his heart sank again.

That was a wild hope soon squelched. The manacles were firm as ever. It must have been one link of the chain grating against another that he had heard. Unaided, he would never be able to get out of the things.

Now the elevator was rising. Sounds of its progress floated up the shaft to where they stood. Lewis could feel his ears burning.

"Quick, Inspector!" he urged. "Take these things off—come on, be a good fellow! They're ridiculous, really—"

"Perhaps they aren't as up-to-date as those you've been accustomed to wearing," interrupted the sleuth from Scotland Yard. "As a matter of fact, they're quite antiquated, I'll admit. Nowadays, so I understand, a bracelet is in almost universal use which fastens the prisoner to his captor. These, you see, are old-style. But I think you'll find they're serviceable—entirely to be depended upon to do their work, I assure you."

He smiled behind his trim beard.

"I'll take your word for it," Lewis told him. "But now won't you listen to reason, and take them off? You've nothing to fear. Honestly, I'm as anxious now to get to the station-house with you, to prove my innocence, you see, as you're eager to take me there."

"That's why you kicked up the row you did back there?" scoffed the detective. "Yes—I think we can trust you, all right! I'd be likely to try it!"

"But I'm resigned now," Lewis urged. "Before I thought I'd rather run the risk of getting into trouble for resisting an officer than being put to

the humiliation of going to jail. I'm awfully sensitive, you know. But now I see it's best for me to go. I'll have to prove I'm not the man you take me for. I've got to prove it. So you won't have a bit of trouble with me after this!"

Inspector Flinch shook his head.

"I'd rather hear you tell it," said he, "with those handcuffs on, than believe it with 'em off. And you'll stay as you are, my friend. That's flat. Here we are. Going down—down here, lift!"

The elevator door rolled open. Lewis, escorted up to the entrance of the car by his two guards, saw that there were already three or four passengers occupying the cage. He dropped his eyes, keeping his arms folded across him stomach with the handcuffs concealed as much as possible by his sleeves, and allowed himself, willy-nilly, to be helped aboard.

These strangers with whom he was forced literally to rub elbows looked at him, to be sure. But, oddly, it was not with the open-mouthed wonder he had anticipated under the circumstances.

And then a possible reason for his calm reception suddenly occurred to Lewis. Stealthily he looked down at himself. The bracelets of steel that bound his wrists were completely hidden, due to the way he held his arms crossed at the front of his coat. Lifting his eyes, he shot a quick glance at the others in the elevator.

Two of the men were no longer looking his way. A third carelessly turned aside his head even as the reporter's eyes reached him. The fourth stranger—but he, at least, was regarding him, Lewis found; staring straight at him, as a matter of fact.

A stout individual, not any too well-dressed, smooth-shaven, with a thin stain of tobacco juice extending from one corner of his mouth to the end of his double chin, as he leaned against the grill-work side of the cage behind the negro elevator-runner. He was



watching the reporter unwaveringly, and on his plump, good-natured countenance there rested an unmistakable expression of sympathy.

Ah, Lewis had it now. The reason his entrance failed to provoke the gaping curiosity from the car's occupants he had dreaded was the simple one that none of these people had as yet tumbled to the real nature of his predicament.

Instead, they took him for a sick man. Seeing him assisted into the elevator with his arms hugging his stomach as though he were stricken with violent cramps, no trace of his manacles being revealed to give any other reason for the unusual attitude—why a temporary invalid must be exactly what he would seem to ninety-nine persons out of a hundred.

The two men who had hold of his elbows heightened, rather than lessened, this impression. Nothing about the dress of either in any way betrayed the fact of his profession; what was to prevent them both being taken merely for a pair of solicitous friends, escorting Lewis home or to the nearest doctor?

Again the reporter looked down at himself, marking the position of his arms that hid his shackles. Now, with an expression of suffering on his face, he knit his brows, pulled down the corners of his mouth, and half closed his eyes. His features bore a look so woe-begone, so utterly anguished, that any one observing him might well have been pardoned the error of thinking him an invalid in the last stages of some incurable disease, instead of only the victim of a passing indisposition.

Fighting against his mounting good-humor, it was all the reporter could do to keep this distressed expression fixed on his countenance. Anybody might see him now as he was being publicly led to limbo, for all he cared. Nobody was going to recognize him for a handcuffed culprit.

Just then the elevator started down. The abrupt jolt of its drop checked

Lewis's heart in its buoyant flight and sent it plunging toward the region of his boots.

All right, was he? Why, now, he realized, with an apprehensive pang—now that he was actually embarked on his trip to jail—his real dilemma had hardly begun.

Instead of losing precious time worrying over the unpleasantness of being seen while he was on his way to a station-house, he ought to be thinking of the more serious side of the fix he was in—what was going to happen him once he got there.

In ten or fifteen minutes at the latest the door of a lock-up would close behind him. And then—well, this wasn't going to be any picnic. Lewis began to feel a chill creeping up from his ankles.

The supposed murderer of a man who did not exist—and yet who had been very much alive, as it turned out, up to just a few days before that wretched crime-story was printed, only to vanish completely on the heels of its publication—what would be the reception the police would accord a suspect under those circumstances? His rather vivid imagination was not long in supplying the answer.

He hadn't much faith in what Brennan had said about the point of law covering the fact that no one could be proved guilty of a capital crime without the body of the slain at hand to establish the existence of a murder—no confidence at all that this would serve to dilute the hot water in which he had more than a premonition he was going to be immersed.

There was enough circumstantial evidence to satisfy any set of bullies in blue uniforms and brass buttons before whom he might be brought. That was all they needed to work on. There were various ways in which they would try to make him supply any evidence that was legally necessary for a conviction himself.

The third degree—it was gold dollars to left-over doughnuts that that

was what he was going up against. Already he could imagine himself undergoing the ordeal:

"Where is the man you killed?"

He would answer—the truth:

"I have killed no one!"

*Biff!*

"Where is the body?"

"I don't know!"

*Biff! Biff!*

"Where is it?"

*Biff*—and so on, till he dropped.

For he would be denied even the left-handed alternative open to a victim of this sweating-out process who was really guilty—the 'confession of the crime. He had no crime to confess.

Pretending to break down, and giving the first place that came into his head as the whereabouts of that missing body, would not bring him a permanent release from his predicament. At once his information would be proved false; and then he would be right back where he started, probably, with redoubled vigor to pay him for lying.

Oh, it was a pretty net that he was being drawn into, Lewis told himself as the elevator stopped, and he was led out and across the lobby of the building to the street. A fine-meshed snare, indeed.

Along Nicollet Avenue, filled with the home-going crowds of clerks and salespeople, the reporter was borne by his two guards, the three jostled on every side by passers-by, but still keeping together.

Nobody paid them any especial attention. Whether Lewis was being mistaken for an invalid in charge of two friends he did not know; for he was not troubling himself to notice how his appearance was received any longer—he had ceased to care about that.

Guiding him off the main thoroughfare just then, his escorts, probably fearing some attempt might be made to interfere with their safe delivery of such an important prisoner, turned with him up a narrow alley that branched off the main avenue.

This, as Lewis knew, was a short cut to the nearest station-house.

Walking along with his eyes fixed straight before him, his jaw grimly set, it was some seconds before he noticed that he and his guards were not alone in that cramped and dim side street—that there were two men walking close beside them, one on either side of the two officers between whom the reporter was being propelled ahead.

Why, one of these men, Lewis made out as he peered through the dusk—unless he was mistaken—that was the chap in the elevator with him back at the *Meteor*, who had carelessly turned aside his eyes when the reporter glanced at him on entering the car. Now he turned to stare past the Scotland Yard sleuth on his right at the other—

It was the fat man, the stout, rather poorly dressed party who had eyed Lewis back there in the elevator with such a compassionate light on his simple moon face. The reporter recognized his presence here with a scowl.

One of those kind-hearted busybodies, likely as not, this plump person had not been able to get over the thought of Lewis being so ill that he had to have two men take him home. He had followed the reporter out of the elevator, therefore, with this other man, who might be his friend. And now he was going to stop them and find out just how badly off Lewis was.

Of course, that would reveal the fact that he wasn't ill, but a prisoner going to jail. And if the fat man felt commiseration for the reporter in the former plight, what would he be likely to do when he discovered the real state of affairs?

It was a hundred-to-one shot that he would have a crowd around them in no time. And thus to add any trifling touch of ignominy that might be lacking from Lewis's predicament—to give his present dilemma further zest, as it were—he could look forward to completing his journey to the station-house at the head of a large and delighted mob.

At that moment his arms were almost

jerked from their sockets, so violent was the tug given his elbows by the abrupt halt of his two guards.

"That's it—now let that guy free!"

What—was he dreaming? Lewis doubted the evidence of his ears, on which, he would have sworn, those blessed words had actually fallen from the lips of the fat man on the detective's other side.

And then he felt the grip of his two captors relax. Their hands slipped slowly off his sleeves—and Lewis was free.

Yet he *must* be only imagining this. Momentarily stunned by the turn things had taken, he still stood between the police officers, waiting to wake up, as it was inevitable he should in a second or two.

He glanced out of the corner of his eye at Sergeant O'Malley on his left. And an involuntary gasp escaped the reporter.

The copper was standing like a graven image, arms rigid at his sides, neck stiff, staring fixedly straight before him. Beads of moisture had formed on his brow. On his face there rested an expression of absolutely pea-green fright. Why—what ailed the man?

Looking quickly around at Inspector Flinch, Lewis's mystification deepened. The detective stood in precisely the same wooden pose of his assistant. But there was not the same look on the inspector's countenance that O'Malley wore. The detective's expression so far transcended the sergeant's look of petrified terror that there was no comparison between them.

Only men in the fear of death itself could look and act as these two—

A glimpse of something shining against the small of the detective's back caught Lewis's eye just then. The something, he knew the second after, was a pistol—a pistol in the hand of the stout stranger.

Its muzzle, pressing against the inspector's spine, was what held him motionless with that mask of white-lipped, straining fear on his features.

Well—O'Malley, a swift glance over his shoulder informed the reporter, stood, too, with a glinting revolver stuck against his backbone by the man ranged alongside of him—here were both of his guards as helpless as he had been a moment since!

"Now, here's your orders!"

The fat man spoke. His tone was quiet, and not in the least unpleasant.

"You two move right on up this alley—see? And no looking back once you get started. In case you don't think we mean business, why—try so much as a peep out of the corner of your eye before you've gone a full fifty yards. You'll both be dead men next minute. Understand?"

"This prisoner," O'Malley began.

"We'll take care of him," the stout stranger interrupted. His broad countenance was grimly set. "Now—walk right on ahead. Fifty yards, and no lookin' back. We shoot at the first shady move."

And the two officers, without another word, started forward. Walking side by side, stiff-backed, lifting and lowering their feet with automatic precision, they moved up the alley like a pair of overgrown, obedient schoolboys.

At last Lewis relaxed his attitude. He lowered his stiffened arms from the front of his coat with a sigh of relief, turning toward his rescuers. He knew who these men were now—it had been stupid of him not to guess their identity long before.

This was the relief expedition Brennan must have sent out to save him, after all. Good old Brennan—he hadn't forgotten him, left him to wriggle out of the hole he had got into on the paper's behalf the best way he could by himself. The city editor was right on the job.

These men he had hired to go after the reporter and drag him from the latter's guards the first minute they had a chance to do it without attracting a crowd—why, they had been engaged for the undertaking with a quickness that aroused Lewis's admiration.

Almost as soon as he left the *Me-teor's* office Brennann must have started pulling wires to save him. The reporter had met his intending liberators coming up in the very elevator which was taking him down. Of course, those other occupants of the car being in the way, the moment had not been propitious for getting him out of the clutches of his captors at once. But, if this unfortunate accident had not stood in the road, Lewis might have been freed within four minutes or less of his departure from the city rooms.

It was little short of miraculous, the speed with which these men, strangers to him, but undoubtedly acquaintances of Brennann, had got "on the job" at the editor's request. The reporter turned to ask a question concerning this.

"Now for a quick sneak!" muttered the fat man's companion. With the latter, he had stood for the past two or three seconds, poised, watching the two police officers as they moved away.

Those gentlemen had got scarcely a dozen feet off. But their backs were still turned.

"Quick is right!" the fat man murmured.

Wheeling, he caught Lewis by one arm, his friend snatched the reporter's opposite elbow, and all three immediately started at a brisk walk that was almost a trot for the opposite end of the narrow street.

A moment, and they were back in the thick of the crowd on Nicollet Avenue. Squeezing through the press, the reporter saw that their goal was a closed cab drawn up at the curb. Of course—his rescue was by no means complete as yet, for soon the hue and cry would go up, and he must be removed far from the scene of his break from captivity at once, or nothing would be accomplished.

Thrown, rather than helped, into the waiting vehicle, Lewis landed on a cushioned seat in the gloom of the cab's interior. Then quickly he faced the door in anxiety lest his deliverers meant

to pack him off alone, forgetful that he still had the handcuffs on his wrists and was thus practically helpless.

But his fears proved groundless. Piling in beside him, the fat man and his friend, having stopped merely to snap a direction at the driver, closed the door. And they were off.

Lewis expelled a deep breath, and grinned around at the two.

"Neat!" he commented approvingly. "Very neat—and, I must say, just in the nick of time! Well, I certainly am indebted to you for this! Believe me, that's from the heart!"

Neither of the men said anything.

"Brennan knew what he was doing," the reporter continued after a pause, "when he picked you two for this job. You handled it to the queen's taste. Any time you're looking for a recommendation as a pair of A number 1 rescuers, you can come to me and I'll fix you up!"

Reaching for his handkerchief to wipe the sweat from his face, Lewis was prevented from getting at his hip-pocket by the manacles.

"Say, I wish you'd take these things off now," he went on, and held up his hands. "I suppose Brennann told you they had these on me when they took me away. He wouldn't forget that. You've brought along something to get them open with, of course. They make me blamed uncomfortable, and I'd like to be out of them as quick as I can—"

The fat man shrugged deeper into the seat he occupied alone, facing Lewis and the other. He pushed aside the drawn curtain a crack, glanced out of the window, then put back the shade.

"You're all right the way you are," he remarked.

Lewis straightened.

"But what's the reason you can't take these things off—"

The man beside him dug his elbow into his ribs.

"Shut up!"

Lewis drew back on the seat. He sat with his lip in his teeth, a thoughtful crease between his brows.

"Oh," he said, in a lower tone, nodding inquiringly first at the man who had prodded him, then at the stout person opposite. "Silence is the game, eh? Musn't talk for fear of the driver—"

The fat man laughed.

There was nothing said any more for the space of a full minute or two. Only the creaking of the ancient cab, the rumble of the wheels and trot of the hoofs of the horse disturbed the hush of the vehicle's interior—that hush that seemed strangely tense to Lewis, as he sat peering through the gloom at the shadowy faces of his companions. The frown on his forehead deepened.

"Look here!" he blurted out at length. "I want to be in on this. Seems to me I ought not to be kept in the dark; when all that's needed is a word or two to let me know where we're bound, why I mustn't talk now, and, above all, why I've got to keep these asinine bracelets on my wrists any longer—"

He stopped short.

"Now you keep your trap shut," said the man beside him, suddenly pushing the muzzle of his pistol hard against the reporter's ribs. "Shut you face, or—maybe we can make you!"

Cold all over, Lewis sat perfectly motionless. Something was wrong here. Something was decidedly wrong, for what kind of a way was this for rescuers to act.

"When I tell Brennant," the reporter exclaimed in a vehement whisper, "how you've treated me, my friends, I imagine you'll sweat—"

A nudge or two of the gun-point hushed him.

"Cut it out!" warned his seatmate. "Don't try to throw no scare into us, bo. We don't care nothin' about this Brennant friend of yours—whoever he is."

"The city editor of the *Meteor*," Lewis began, his eyes widening in surprise.

"Never heard of him," shrugged the other.

Lewis whipped around.

"You—you never heard—"

The pistol jumped viciously against the middle of his vest. The man beside him leaned forward, looking him narrowly in the eye.

"Make another move like that!" he hissed. His baleful gaze riveted the reporter into gaping fixity on the seat. "I'd put a pill into you quick as look. Goin' to behave, are you? You'd better. Naw, we never heard of Brennant—Brennant, the editor on the *Meteor*. And, what's more, we don't want to hear nothin' about him—see? All we want out of you is to keep a still tongue in your head till you get to where you're goin'. And then—well, then, maybe, we'll hear what you've got to say!"

Lewis sat around straight on the seat. He was looking squarely at the fat man, who now sat, a somewhat bored look on his features, with his pistol in his lap, its point trained in the vicinity of the reporter's upper left-hand vest-pocket. And distinctly Lewis could feel the muzzle of the other's gun pressing into his side.

These—these men were utter strangers to the situation. They didn't know Brennant. They weren't emissaries sent by the editor, at all. And, more than everything else, it was entirely plain from their present attitude that they were not by any means friendly to him, the man they had saved from the hands of the police by their daring, broad-day hold-up.

Friendly to him? Lewis stared at the fat man guarding him with his gun, while he felt the weapon of the other touching his side. Well, no; one would hardly call this a little reunion of stanch comrades.

Then why had he been taken away from the two officers of the law by these men? What in the mischief, anyway, was their game?

Had Lewis, at that moment, known the answer to that perplexing question, beyond a doubt he would have braved the two guns under whose muz-

zles he sat, and bolted through the window of the cab, glass, shade, and all.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN.

SITTING in utter silence, not daring to ask any of the multitudinous questions that whirled through his mind, Lewis listened with straining ears to the progress of the cab.

Perhaps he could gather from the street-noises outside some hint of where they were bound.

Suddenly he caught a change in the hoofbeats. Still striking on asphalt, but with a duller, more hollow plop-plopping of iron on the hard tar, as though the passage across the roof of a subterranean chamber.

A bridge! What was it; they were crossing the bridge from the west side of the city to the east side.

So their destination lay somewhere in that quarter. Lewis's lips tightened distrustfully. There were a great many rookeries, low dives, etc., located in certain sections of this locality. The Cherry Roost, for instance.

A nice prospect if he was being taken to that same roost now.

But what reason was there for the plight he was in now? None whatever that a sane man could discover.

At that moment the cab halted. Lewis steeled himself to be ready for anything, as the fat man, pocketing his pistol, opened the door.

"Get out," laconically ordered the other man.

Following the fat person, Lewis descended to the pavement and started to take a glance around at his surroundings. At once, though, he was pushed rapidly across the sidewalk, up a dingy flight of steps, and into the vestibule at the top of the stoop before which the cab had drawn up.

Opening the front door, the stout stranger, aided by his companion, hustled Lewis inside, then swiftly closed the portal.

"Right along!" invited the fat man, breathing a deep sigh of relief. "Up we go—this way!"

And he started up a long flight of stairs, whose threadbare carpet offered several pitfalls for unwary feet in the form of gaping holes. Lewis and the other followed close behind.

One landing, lighted by a turned-down gas-jet in a broken china globe, was reached. Then they went up another flight of stairs to another landing, along this to a door which, after unlocking, the fat man threw open, stepping across the threshold of a sparsely furnished room and striking a match along the leg of his trousers.

"All right, Brady," he called back over his shoulder.

The gas-light flared up as Lewis and the other man entered the room. The key was in the door, and his companion, turning, removed it and inserted it on the inside. Then he shut that door and locked it, testing its security by shaking the knob.

"Now we're all cozy!" chuckled the plump person, dropping down in a chair with a puffing explosion of breath.

He took out his handkerchief—not a very white one, if the truth be told—and mopped his ruddy countenance.

The reporter, his own face standing out with a moisture not entirely produced by physical exertion, would have liked mightily to imitate him in the action, but, unfortunately, he was still deterred from the free use of his hands by a matter of a pound or so of steel that depended from his wrists.

"Sit down," growled the man called Brady, nodding to the side of a bed that had not yet been made up.

Passing Lewis on the way from the door, he took the one other chair in the room.

The reporter stepped back and did as he was bid, perching gingerly on the extreme rim of the tumbled mattress. And there he faced his two companions.

"Well?" the reporter inquired. His tone was grim.

The fat man chuckled anew.

"Pretty well." He wagged his head facetiously at Lewis. "And how do you find yourself?"

The reporter half rose from the bed.

"Admitting the cleverness of your repartee," he said, in a voice through which suppressed wrath began to be apparent, "don't you think this is a poor time to be indulging in breezy bandinage?"

The fat man laughed. There was very little mirth in it, however.

"Ain't gettin' sore, are you?" he asked.

Lewis sat down.

"Oh, no. I'm having the time of my life. What in the world put the idea into your head that I'd be feeling peevish about anything?"

Brady jerked his head impatiently.

"Go on, Pete," said he. "Get it out of him."

Leisurely the fat man reached around and drew out a plug of chewing tobacco from his pocket. He bit off a generous morsel, stowed in with mathematical accuracy in one corner of his cheek, replaced the wofully damaged plug, and wiped his hand lingeringly on his thigh.

"Evidently you've brought me here," suggested Lewis, "to do something besides talk about our luck so far in escaping the doctors' care, and such like topics of breathless interest. Whenever you get ready—"

He paused politely. Crossing one leg over the other, he embraced his knee with his handcuffed hands.

"Why was you bein' pinched by them two fly-cops?" inquired the stout man suddenly.

Lewis shot a quick look at him.

"So you don't know that?"

"Didn't say whether I did or not, did I?—I'm askin' you?"

The reporter hesitated.

"I was playing tiddledywinks with a party of friends last Sunday night and the place was raided. I tried to skip my bail. But, as bad luck would have it, I couldn't make my getaway, so—"

Pete, shifting his quid, nodded soberly.

"Who's indul— who's kiddin' now?" he asked calmly. "I thought you was one that didn't care nothin' about your little joke, at a time like this."

"Well, you asked me why—"

"And you didn't say it was for murder, did you?" cut in the other man. "Well, you could have saved your breath, anyway. We knew what you was on your way for, all right, all right."

"Yeah—we're on!" added the fat man, leaning forward. "Dead to rights, they had you, bo—for the murder of that John S. Perkins there's been so much yawpin' about in the papers, both here and in St. Paul—we know!"

Lewis had uncrossed his legs. He was rubbing the palms of his hands nervously together.

"It was a false arrest," he began.

"They've got a song about that!" scoffed Pete. "'That's what they all say'. Why, lemme tell you. Without seein' you between them two cops, I'd 'a' known in a minute, from all the descriptions I've read o' what this suspect looked like, that you was the guy—known it with one eye shut!"

"Well, I tell you," Lewis declared. "I didn't murder that man—any more than you did!"

"Hanh!"

The somewhat nasal exclamation of interest with which the two greeted this announcement came in an excited duet. They were both bending forward now, Brady having risen from his chair to lean over its back.

"So Perkins ain't dead, after all?"

The reporter looked from one to the other.

"I'm sure," he answered, slowly shaking his head, "I don't know anything at all about it!"

"You lie!"

Brady had straightened, thrusting his chair one side with a violent shove. He advanced a step, doubling his fists his brows lowering.

"Don't tell us!" he rasped. "You're the feller that shot him down here on Nicollet Avenue. It was your gang that had that autermobile come up and sneak the body away—and you don't know nothin' about it! G'wan, what d'ye think we are—a couple o' mutts that ain't got nothin' but space-to-let in our domes? G'wan—I'll t'ump you one!"

The reporter stumbled to his feet.

"If I had my hands free," he began, threateningly.

But the fat man interposed a grimy palm.

He called sharply to his friend:

"You fool! What's the matter with you—lookin' to queer the whole game? You sit down, or I'll put one across on you myself!"

Brady glowered. Then he shrugged, kicked his chair around, and dropped into it.

Lewis, still on his feet, faced Pete, the intermediary.

"Now, out with it!" he demanded. "This game of yours—just what is it? I want to know, without any more nonsense, what you're up to with me. Understand?" and he looked determinedly from one to the other.

The fat man sat back in his chair.

"Well, bo, we'll come right out with all cards face-up on the board. Guess you must be wingin' some in your mind to get at why we pulled you away from them broadsoles; what int'rust we had in the little affair for which you was being pinched this evenin'—huh? You ain't 'made' that yet, have you?"

Lewis shook his head.

"No," said he, "I haven't."

Pete looked across at Brady with a meaning nod.

"Well, what's the answer?" the reporter urged.

"You never laid eyes on us before to-night," the fat man went on, facing him again; "you don't know nothin' about the business that brought us over here to this city to-day. We're from St. Paul, my pal and me. St. Paul—that mean anything to you?"

"Nothing much," Lewis replied.

"'Nothin' much,' says you," the stout one nodded. "'Nothin' much'—a good, safe way of answerin' that it only means the hailin'-place of the man you killed here on the streets of Minneapolis a few days back!"

Lewis opened his mouth, then closed it again. He had changed his mind about speaking.

"St. Paul is where Perkins came from, ain't it?" his interlocutor continued.

"Perkins—?"

"Yes, Perkins, Perkins—John S. Perkins. Who else d'ye suppose?" and Pete spat into the cuspidor beside his chair, eying the reporter narrowly.

"I understand," the latter answered, "that that was the home of—of the man for whose supposed murder I was being taken to jail to-night, yes."

Brady flounced petulantly.

"Stringin' along like this," he growled, disgustedly, "'stead of gettin' down to straight talk!"

"The way we see it, cul," proceeded the fat man curtly, "you want to drop all that line of gab. That injured innocence dope—no need of pullin' that with us. We're all in the same line. If we're goin' to do business together, why—nix on the stall any longer."

Lewis leaned against the head of the bed, crossing his feet.

"I'm still waiting, you know, to find out what that business is," he remarked.

"Well, you'll know it quick enough!" snapped Pete. He bent forward again. "Here's the way things stand. We was hired to do the same job you nabbed away from us—now, wait!"

Lewis's lips had parted.

"I didn't say, did I, that you took the job away from us knowin' you was crabbin' somebody else's lay? No matter about my pal, here. He thinks you cut in and grabbed the thing out of our hands, deliberate. My opinion is, you didn't know we was workin' on it at all. Now, how about that?"

Lewis hesitated for his answer.



"Go on," he said noncommittally, after a brief pause.

"Which means I've got you right," the fat man nodded. "You didn't know there was anybody else on it when you took hold of this graft. And that, lemme tell you, is one good thing for you. If you'd cut out me and him"—with a nod at the grimly silent Brady—"intendin' to shove us inter the discard, well—you wouldn't exactly have no cause to be glad afterward!"

His hands doubled on his knees into two menacing fists; then quickly relaxed. Shifting his quid, he went on:

"But you didn't know you was goin' to run foul of us. It ain't your fault that both you and me and my pal, here, was workin' on this at the same time. Nobody's to blame for it but that there bonehead bunch that hired us. Oh, you have to hand it to 'em, all right! They're a fine set of brainy lads, I don't think!"

Lewis was trying to keep his eyes from being pushed noticeably out of their sockets by the force of the idea that struggled in his brain. He had to clear his throat before he could speak steadily.

"As I get it, you believe I was hired by somebody to—to murder Perkins?"

The fat man slowly grinned.

"My, but you're the wise one, ain't you? Want to be sure you ain't givin' away no information before you open your face to say a word. Well, it's all right—you're among friends, and you needn't hold back. Yes, we 'believe' you was hired to do away with that guy, some way."

"And, at the same time, somebody employed you to murder him, too—in case I fell down on the case, I presume?" Lewis added.

Pete frowned impatiently.

"Say, what d'ye want?" he demanded. "A diagram of this whole deal, from start to finish, before you can get down to cases? I tell you, you don't need to be leary of us. We know what you was hired for. Ain't it enough, when we say we was engaged

for the same job?—even though we didn't carry it through, on account of you gettin' in your licks first. You can talk right out, without any risk of spillin' the beans, blabbin' any secrets—"

"Make me believe that," Lewis eagerly interrupted. "Do as you said—run over the facts in this case for me, so I can be sure of how much you know."

Brady, with an oath, started to his feet as one at the end of his patience. But the fat man waved him back into his chair a second time.

"John S. Perkins is the only Independent concrete manufacturer in St. Paul, ain't he?" counted off Pete on his fingers before the reporter. "Sealed bids is asked on the new work of public improvement that's goin' to be started by the city gov'ment—right? The Concrete Trust wants to get the contract, don't it? And—it knows it *won't* get the job if Perkins puts in his bid."

He sat back, doubling the five pudgy fingers of one hand over with the other, and looked inquiringly at Lewis.

"All right, so far?" he asked.

"Go on," the reporter requested again, regarding the fat man steadily.

"Well, why has Perkins got a strangle-hold on that contract? He's only goin' to put in his bid along with all the other sep'rate comp'nies under the trust's control. So it don't look, at the outset, as if he stood any more chance than anybody else. Yet, as sure as day comes after night, the work's goin' to him the minute them bids is all opened—there's nothin' else to it."

"And the answer's this: Perkins, after tryin' for years, has fin'ly doped out a way to make concrete fifty per cent cheaper than it's ever been made before. He's kept quiet about his invention, had it patented, and all, and now he's goin' to spring it at last. His bid's goin' in on this city improvement job at a figger that'll make the trust's look like bare-faced robbery

alongside of it. And *that's* why he's got a lead-pipe cinch."

Pete stopped, and replaced his hands on his knees, lolling back.

"Well," snapped Lewis breathlessly, his reportorial instinct aroused through force of habit. "The rest of it—the meat of the story, man?"

"Well, there's where me an' my pal comes in," resumed the other, surveying him with quizzically lifted brows. "Of course, the trust ain't goin' to stand still and let that juicy plum of a city contract get out of its hands. The way to turn the trick is to get rid of Perkins. He's got to be put out of the way—till after the date set for the close of all bids on the job.

"So me and Brady, we hears through the boss of our ward that headquarters wants to see us. Nothin' said about what's wanted. Just word to report right away to the big mogul.

"We hustles around, and we sees the chief. Besides bein' the chief, it seems he's a heavy stockholder in this here Concrete Trust. He gives us a line on what's up: the city contract, and Perkins's invention, which is bound to make his bid the prize-winner. Even the boss wouldn't be able to stop it, if it came in cuttin' the others square in half. Only one thing's to be done. Keep Perkins from biddin' at all. And the way to do that is to railroad him—soak him under cover till after the twenty-eighth of the month.

"The chief says he's heard of us through Lafferty, the boss of our ward. A couple o' men who're purty sure to bring down what they go after, he's been give as our number. Now, can we get on the trail of this Perkins guy, lookin' him up from his photograph, house and business address, nab him, and see to it that he don't show up till after the day the bids close? If we can carry out the job—five hundred, dollars cash, is comin' to us.

"Five hundred iron men, to be divided between Brady, here, and me—say! We jump at the chance to collar that wad. We grab at it. And"—

sorrowfully the fat man shook his head at Lewis—"we don't get it. We lose that easy coin—why?"

"Because, as it's easy to figger out, somebody else on the inside of the trust thinks he can get rid of Perkins, too. 'Stead of leavin' the whole thing to the boss, as a three-year-old would know was the right move to make in a case like this, the rest of them brilliant business leaders go ballin' things up by lettin' everybody take a crack at the game. They hire *you* to put this inventor-feller out of the road—

"But that's gettin' ahead of the way things happened. We'll go back to me and Brady, startin' out from the private office of the boss to find and kidnap this Perkins.

"We locate the guy without no trouble. Then we start shadowin' him. The time, you see, ain't just ripe for runnin' off with him yet. We can't never catch him alone. And it ain't goin' to do to be too bold about turnin' the trick. Shanghain' a man in front of a lot of witnesses would only get us inter hot water. So, layin' for our chance, we foller him around everywhere he goes. And then—all of a sudden he disappears."

Pete nodded at the reporter.

"And that's where *you* come inter it. Workin' for the trust at the same time with us, you must've sent some kind of a decoy telegram or letter to Perkins, tellin' him to come over to Minneapolis in a hurry, and without sayin' nothin' to nobody about it. He fell for it, landed over here, and then you and your crowd got him. Me and Brady was dished—shut out in the cold.

"Soon as we read in the papers what happened, we was on. Other parties had been hired to do what we was to get paid for handlin' alone. But," and here Pete leaned forward again, looking up at Lewis with his jaw outthrust, "we made up our minds, my pal and me, that we wasn't goin' to be side-tracked this way. Not if we knowed it, we wasn't.

"We wanted to be in on this deal.

Whoever it was had took the bread out of our mouths, by cuttin' us out of the chance to earn that five hundred, was goin' to put some of it back. We had a notion that if we come over to Minneapolis, and had a little talk with the parties that had beat us to it in gettin' rid of this Perkins, why, maybe—just *maybe*—we could persuade 'em that they'd better count us in on what they was gettin' out of the thing!

"So over here we blew this afternoon. We hadn't no more idea than the police or anybody had, of course, who the ringleader of the bunch that had done up Perkins was, but we figgered on gettin' on his trail some way. As a flier, we was goin' up to see the newspaper in that buildin' this evenin'—to find out if they had any clues to hand out to a couple of amachure detectives, you know—when there we met you, easy enough to spot from all the descriptions that'd been printed, pinched already by the bulls, and bein' trotted to jail. Well, that was luck for us!

"I tips Brady, here, my scheme after you'd gone out of that elevator, and we was trailin' along, kind of aimless-like, behind.

"'Here,' I says, 'this guy's up against it,' I says. 'Suppose we get him away from them cops,' I says, 'and put it up to him, straight, that he's to give us the tip on where'bouts he's got Perkins's body, dead or alive, hid away. Then, I says, 'we'll talk business.

"'He can't collect his pay for puttin' the man out of the road, can he, in jail? Well, we can keep him from landin' there. Out o' gratitude for that, he's got to take us in with him. He'll tell us where to go to bring to light Perkins or his corpse. Then, on the twenty-eighth, we'll have that inventor or his body to show to the boss, our five hundred will come across, we'll share it up in thirds, and then us for the quick get-away. There,' I says to Brady, 'is my scheme in a nutshell—and what d'ye think of it?'"

The fat man stopped. He was still looking up at Lewis, but with a smile, instead of the ugly, hard-jawed expression, resting on his face.

"And that's what I'm askin of you," he went on. "What d'ye think of the idea? You're satisfied now, I take it, that you don't need to do no more beat-in' around the bush. You can see that we're all, as you might say, pals together. So we'll come right to the showdown. You can share and share alike with me and my friend in that five hundred—if you'll just tell us where John S. Perkins is. Is that a bet?"

Lewis had been doing some quick thinking. It was easy enough to understand now the reason for the sudden disappearance of this Perkins in St. Paul.

With those two thugs dogging his heels everywhere he went, their game, as the Independent concrete manufacturer must have guessed, being to keep him from putting in his bid on that important city improvement job in competition with the trust—to prevent it by physical force—no wonder the man had skipped out.

To save his skin, probably he had gone into hiding somewhere. He was only waiting for the day before the twenty-eighth of the month to draw around, when he would send in his bid by mail, its eleventh-hour arrival making it too conspicuous to be ignored—

Why, to-day was the twenty-sixth. In forty-eight hours more Perkins would have emerged from obscurity, alive and well—proof in the flesh that Lewis had never harmed one hair of his head, much less wilfully murdered him.

If he had known the facts in the case before, the reporter would have been satisfied to go to jail and suffer whatever harsh treatment was meted out to him there, in perfect confidence that his tribulations were certain to be at an end in two days' time—

"Well?"—the voice of the fat man intruded on his reflections just then.

"We're waitin', bo. Are you goin' to slip us the answer, or ain't you? Where is Perkins hid?"

"I don't know," Lewis truthfully replied.

"All right," commented Pete. "You won't tell. I guess you forget the favor we done you here. We got you away from them fly-cops. If we hadn't took you out o' their hands, you know what was goin' to happen to you, don't you? Yes—you'd have landed in the chair. That's what—the chair. And now you take this straight. Either you tip us off to where you've planted this guy or his body, or—we take you back to the police on the run. Get it?"

Lewis's heart gave a bound. In the custody of the law was now where he would ten times rather be, if he had his choice, than at the mercy of these rascals. And here he had that choice virtually offered him.

Drawing himself up, the reporter folded his arms. In the manner of a ten-twenty-thirty hero of melodrama, he declaimed:

"Very well. Do your worst—take me back to the police!"

His captors surveyed him in silence for a moment or two. Then the fat man slowly nodded.

"You called the turn, friend," said he. "I guess slow-thinkin' ain't one o' your failin's. You win out—we can't take you back to the bulls. Stickin' that pair of 'em up on the street to get you away has put us in wrong with the coppers, too. They'd make it warm for us if they ever spotted Brady and me again—just the way you figgered. But that's all right. Maybe you'll listen to another argument now."

And, looking across at his partner, he pulled a cheap watch from his vest pocket with one hand. Brady, in response to the fat man's glance, had pulled his gun with alacrity and trained its muzzle on the reporter's chest.

Rubbing his thumb over the crystal of the timepiece, Pete sat looking down at it.

"Now," and he suddenly glanced up at Lewis, "you tell us where you've hid Perkins. Don't hesitate too long about it, either, 'cause you've only got sixty seconds before my pal, here, cuts loose. One minute for you to give us the answer—and that same minute's already begun!"

Lewis's eyes were held fascinated by the fat man's steady gaze. He could feel his scalp lifting. His heart was no longer beating.

What—what, in reason's name, was he going to do? He knew no more than his two captors where Perkins at that moment happened to be. Yet he must tell them the man's whereabouts—accomplish the impossible, and that within the space of one swift-slipping minute, or—be shot in his tracks.

"And I told Brennand"—the thought leaped into his brain to mock him at that inopportune instant—"there wasn't going to be any come-back to this. Oh, Lord!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### A WHISTLE IN THE STREET.

As sure as he had ever been of anything in his life, Lewis was sure that these rogues meant business. They would shoot him down without the least compunction, unless he yielded to their demand.

They had given him only a minute, a minute that might already be half, three-quarters gone—

"All right—I'll tell!"

He blurted out the words, his tongue, thick with apprehension, stumbling in its office.

Beads of cold moisture that had stood out on his brow during the tense pause, now started trickling down his cheeks. His knees trembled under him, as Brady lowered the point of his weapon, and the fat man, glancing once more at the watch in his hand, returned it to his pocket with a curt nod.

"And it's a good thing for you"—Pete's remark provided Lewis just then

with the necessary breathing-space in which to recover his lost poise—"a good thing for you you've got that quick-thinkin' habit. You didn't have more'n nineteen seconds to spare. A few more ticks of the old turnip—But I'm glad to see you decided to give in. That shows you got sense, bo. Now, come across. We're listenin' to you."

Indeed, there was no mistaking the fact that the reporter had their undivided attention. His two hosts waited for his disclosure eagerly, perched forward on the edges of their respective chairs, with glistening eyes and lips expectantly parted.

Lewis had gathered his faculties. What he meant to do was simply to give Perkins's whereabouts at random—naming any place at all that first came into his mind, as the address of the missing man.

In prison, that would have served no purpose. The police, in ignorance of whether he was telling the truth or not, would have been compelled to leave him, of course, while they investigated his clue. But they would have left him securely locked behind the bars—safe against their return. Here it was different.

Let him tell these two ruffians that Perkins was hidden in some plausible place—not too far away; in another section of the same city, for example—and off they would dash on the false scent the next instant. Why, it was all they were waiting for to leave the room in a mad bolt—a hint of the locality in which they could find the man they were to be paid five hundred dollars for turning up at the end of the next two days.

With them gone, it was going to be comparatively easy work for Lewis to get away. Doors of wood could never hold him as bars of steel might have done—

"Get a wiggle onto you!" the fat man exclaimed. "We can't sit here all night—where'd you take this guy, huh?"

Lewis met his eyes, and those of the hot-tempered Brady, with unruffled front. The lie he was about to tell them was going to be child's play for him. Faking stories was one of the best things he did!

"Do either of you know where—er—"

The reporter paused, frowning while he thought for a moment. The goal of the wild-goose chase on which he meant to despatch this precious pair would have to be at such a distance as would prevent their return to that room in any very brief period.

"Where?" eagerly echoed Pete, bending forward.

The other kidnaper, too, was craning half out of his chair.

"Sure, sure!" he snapped impatiently. "Where—"

The reporter regarded them slowly, first one and then the other.

"Where Lake Street is?" he finished.

The fat man waved his hand.

"We can find it easy enough!" said he. "Go on—what's the number of the house, pal?"

"The number," supplied Lewis, "is 8063. It's a three-story flat. Brownstone front, with a high stoop—you can't miss it, if you count three doors down from the corner of Portland Avenue."

Pete was on his feet. The reporter scanned his face—but it was all right. There was no indication that the fat man, a stranger in the city, disbelieved him.

"Ring Pratt's bell," Lewis went on. "You give three short rings, two long, then three short again." Watching the seriously attentive faces of the couple, it was with difficulty that he restrained the impulse to add facetiously: "And then you bite your initials in the door-knob while you recite the 'Gipsy's Curse'!"

Pete whirled on Brady.

"Got that?" he demanded of his confederate.

"I'm hep," growled the other. He

settled his hat further down on his brow. Buttoning his coat, he stuffed his gun into his side-pocket. "Anything else?" he inquired of the reporter.

Lewis shrugged, turning aside.

"The door will open," he said wearily. "Go in. Walk up to the second floor, knock twice, and Pratt, my partner, will show you the man you want. That's all."

His back was turned on the two. Next moment his pulses leaped. There was the sound of quick footsteps crossing the floor, the key turning in the lock, the door's swift opening—and then its clattering bang back in the frame. Sweet music in his ears. He was alone—

"Well," said the fat man behind him, "you might as well sit down while we're waitin'."

Lewis swung round, his jaw fallen, to stare at Pete, calmly bending over the key in the lock, which he turned once more, making the door secure after the departure of Brady—who had gone to look up the reporter's blind clue alone!

The thought had never struck the reporter that this would happen. He had relied on a fever of avarice clouding the minds of both his captors the minute they knew the supposed hiding-place of the man they were after. In a panic of eagerness to get to the address he had given, they ought to have dashed together from that room without a shadow of a suspicion that he could be getting rid of them by a ruse.

But it was apparent that these two tough ward-healers from the slums of St. Paul weren't so easy as all that. It had not been premeditated, but instinctive with them to separate thus: one to investigate the genuineness of Lewis's information, the other to ride herd on the reporter till it had been ascertained whether or not their prisoner's usefulness to them was exhausted.

"How long," asked the fat man good-humoredly, returning from at-

tending to the safe bolting of the door to reseat himself opposite Lewis—"how long d'ye figger it'll take Brady to make Lake Street and back?"

Lewis swallowed on the rising lump in his throat. How long, indeed, before the man would return to disclose the fact of the reporter's subterfuge? Suppose, inquiring of the first person he met outside, the way to the number and street Lewis had given him, the fellow should discover immediately that he had been hoodwinked? It was not beyond the range of probability that this might happen. And, in that event, he might come back at any moment; might, even now, be returning with enough red fire to supply a whole election campaign smoldering in each eye—

What would they do to him, these desperate rascals, when they learned how he had victimized them—tried to pull the wool over their eyes?

He was trapped. His bluff was certain to be called. And the consequences—well, they weren't likely to be pleasant, no matter what form they took; that was also a cinch.

"Say," remarked his stout companion at that moment, "there's one thing about you. It takes you longer to make up your mind about answerin' a straight question than any guy I ever see or heard of before. Maybe you're a little deaf. I asked you just now—how long d'ye figger Brady'll be in gettin' back?"

Suddenly Lewis decided on his course.

"I—look here!" he stammered. "You—the fact of the matter is, your friend Brady is likely to be back here in next to no time!"

The fat man did not appear surprised.

"So?" he commented. "Lake Street ain't far off, then?"

"It's about a half-hour's ride on the car," the reporter grimly answered.

Pete looked at him sharply.

"What's the game?" he wanted to know. There was no lack of interest

in his expression now. Lewis's eyes shifted, then dropped before his gaze.

"That's what it is," he explained—"a game. I sent your partner out on a bluff. There's no such number, so far as I'm aware, as 8063 Lake Street. I can tell you that, before Brady comes back to report it."

The fat man grunted. He shifted his quid with deliberation, still regarding the reporter narrowly. Beyond that grunt, however, he said nothing.

"Well," hazarded Lewis nervously, "there you are!"

Pete opened his lips.

"Yeah," said he. "And here *you* are—that's the main thing, my friend. Here you are, and here you'll stay, till Brady comes back to say the address you give him is a vacant lot. Well—we sorter figgered you might try something' of the kind. But can you tell me where it's got you anything?"

Lewis shrugged ruefully.

"You cannot," nodded the other. "No, pal—we ain't to be shook by no such small-time stunt as this. And we're goin' to get what we want out of you yet. Maybe next time you'll see fit to give us the right steer to where this Perkins really is!"

"Say, listen to me!" Lewis put in earnestly. "I mean what I say now. I don't know any more than a man on Mars where Perkins is to be found—his hiding-place is as much of a mystery to me as it is to you. Do you understand that?"

Pete smiled scornfully.

"Why," he asked, "you ain't mislaid him, have you? *You* took and bunked him out of sight. And now you tell me you can't remember where you put him—"

"I had nothing whatever to do with his disappearance," Lewis struck in. "You've made a mistake, that's all. Instead of being an employee of the Concrete Trust, as you and your partner think, let me tell you I never so much as knew that organization was in existence before to-night. You've mistaken your man from the start!"

The stout tough scratched his chin. He shot a quick look at Lewis out of the corner of his eye. Then he stirred uneasily in his chair. The seriousness of the reporter's tone carried with it the ring of conviction.

"If you wasn't the guy that shot Perkins," Pete slowly asked, "what was you *doin'* bein' hustled to jail by them two coppers to-night? Don't tell me that was a false arrest. You look enough like the fellow they been writin' up in the papers as the one that done that job to satisfy a blind man—"

"Hold on!" and Lewis, turning, sat down on the side of the bed. He leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. "I can see where that, and maybe a lot more, puzzles you. Well, there's just one way to make you understand. I'll tell you the whole story."

He had decided he must do that. It was the only chance he had left of escaping. By making a clean breast of the hoax he had perpetrated in the newspaper's behalf, in consequence of which he had been unfortunate enough to be found by these two thugs in the hands of the police, perhaps he could satisfactorily demonstrate the fact that they might as well part now, first as last.

To be sure, he had given his word to Brennan that he would not divulge the paper's secret. But what possible damage could it do the *Meteor* to let this stranger from another town in on the truth of the affair? Assuredly no harm could come from a confession in this case.

And so he explained the whole thing, from beginning to end, to the fat man; telling him how the newspaper had been up against it for a crime-story; the way in which such an item of apparently genuine news had been produced; the accident of John S. Perkins's name being used as that of the "victim" of a murder which actually had never taken place—Lewis held nothing back.

"And them actor-friends of yours, that you say helped you carry out the

racket," Pete remarked, after the somewhat lengthy pause he allowed to follow the reporter's last words—"where did you say they was now?"

"Half-way back East by this time," Lewis replied.

The other slowly shook his head.

"It's a hot one," said he. "By George, it's the hottest I ever heard!"

"Don't you believe me?" Lewis asked with some anxiety.

"Believe you?" and Pete stared at him in honest wonder. "Why, say, d'ye suppose I think for one minute that you could have made that yarn up out of your head? I know it must have *happened*. Don't you worry none about me not believin' it. We made a mistake, all right, when we grabbed you away from them cops—I see that now."

Lewis half rose to embrace the man for his words, but corrected the wild impulse in time. This was almost too good to be true. Actually, the fellow believed him—he had listened to his story, credited it, and now expressed the conviction that he and his partner had made a mistake in making him a prisoner—well, here was an end to his troubles at last!

The reporter stood up.

"I imagine I can go now?" he remarked.

Pete, hitching back in his chair, with difficulty crossed one bulky leg over its fellow in an attitude vaguely suggestive of a man at his ease. He shook his head at Lewis pleasantly enough.

"No," said he. "I wouldn't be in a hurry just yet a while, if I was you. Sit down."

"But I want to go!" the reporter protested, his brows drawing together in a perplexed frown. "You've got nothing to get out of me, as you yourself have already admitted—"

"Sit down," the fat man repeated. "You've got lots of time. You're going to wait till Brady gets back, you know."

Lewis's spirits sank. Brady—flatly, he was afraid of that dour customer. Perhaps he wouldn't be so easily con-

vinced of the truth of the story he had just related to his partner. Indeed, the chances were two to one against it. And what if that absent ruffian, returning, should talk Pete over to his side, persuading the latter that he had been listening to a pack of lies—

"Look here, I'm in more or less of a hurry!" the reporter went on. "This is nonsense—the idea of my waiting here for your friend, when there's no telling just when he'll be back, and—and why the deuce do I need to hang around for him, anyway? Unlock that door, and let me go on about my business. When the man comes back, tell him you let me go, and why—that you'd both made a mistake in bringing me here in the first place. That ought to satisfy him."

Pete nodded toward the bed.

"You might as well take a load off your feet," he remarked indifferently. "You'll wait here till my pal comes back, and that's all there is to it. Squatty-voov," and he smilingly beckoned Lewis toward his former perch on the edge of the tumbled mattress.

With liberty in his very grasp—was he going to be kept here, to satisfy the whim of this fat lummock? Lewis inwardly raged.

"See here!" He appealed frankly to his captor. "Don't you understand how I feel about this? Your friend Brady—well, to put it mildly, he's got about the same kindly disposition as a rattlesnake and a snapping turtle, combined. If it hadn't been for your interference ever since I met you two, that man would have been on the mat with me, chewing my ear. You saw what a sore-head he was."

Pete deprecatingly shook his head.

"Just his way," he explained leniently. "Brady's a good feller, once you get acquainted with him underneath the rough finish that hard knocks has put on to him. He wouldn't 'a' done nothin' to you. Why, I know them as thinks my pal's a reg'lar parlor pet—"

"Animal-tamers, and so on," Lewis curtly nodded. "They'd be the only



ones I can imagine feeling that way about him. Personally, I don't fancy I'd pick him out at first choice for a little playmate. But—if it's all the same to you, I don't want to be here when he gets back. I sent him out on a fool's errand. I don't believe he'll greet me on his return with anything like cordiality. And so, to avoid trouble—"

"That's somethin' you should have thought of before," judiciously commented the fat man. "You did let him go pikin' off nowhere lookin' for nothin', didn't you? If there's any trouble comin' to you, why, it appears to me like you ordered it. You'll have to take your medicine, bo!"

Lewis snapped his tongue.

"Oh, what's the good of all this?" he demanded impatiently. "Listen to me a minute. You've acted rather more friendly to me than he has. You're a decent-enough fellow at heart, I haven't a doubt. I don't think you want to see me go through any tougher sledging than I've already experienced. Why, that's the reason you've taken my part, kept that man from cutting loose with me on at least three separate occasions—"

"If that's worryin' you any to understand," Pete interjected easily, "why, I can tip you off to the answer there. Figgerin' you was the guy that did know where this Perkins was hid, and that it was all accordin' to the way you was handled whether or not you told us the place to find him, I had an idea you'd answer to friendly treatment better'n the rough stuff. See? That's all that amounts to."

The reporter had his ear trained for footsteps on the stairs, listening for the ominous tread that might at any moment herald the return of Brady, who had been gone, now, fully a quarter of an hour.

"Well," Lewis breathlessly resumed, "there's nothing I can do to help you find the man. You see that, don't you? Then why do you want to keep me here? There must be something back of it. Surely you aren't

afraid of your partner. It isn't because you don't dare let me go, fearing what he'll do or say when he gets back to find I'm no longer here—"

Pete spat once more into the cuspidor.

"Funny," said he, "you can't guess why I'm so anxious to hold on to you. Ain't there no glimmer of the reason shot into your brain yet? A mighty important one, that you'd be sure to think of yourself if you was in the place of my pal and me."

"It's beyond me," Lewis confessed.

"Why, you've got it all framed up in your mind," the other nodded comfortably, "that you're goin' to walk out of this room, free as the day, in just about five minutes more—that is, if you have luck talkin' me around to lettin' you skip out before Brady comes—ain't that right? My, my! You must have me figgered for a sleep-walker. That's what it is—you think I ain't awake!"

The reporter regarded him in puzzled fashion.

"I simply can't fathom any sensible reason why you should want to keep me here after this—"

"After this?" echoed the fat man. "After this—why, bo, that's where the bet lies, *exactly*. We blabbed our game to you, didn't we? Well, now you know too much to be let loose. So—you'll stay a while, that's all."

Lewis threw back his head.

"I won't whisper a word of what you've told me to a soul," he promised, drawing a breath of relief now that he knew where the hitch came in.

"Yeah—a fine chance," sniffed Pete. "A fine chance you'd keep your mouth shut—and you a reporter!"

"I give you my word—" Lewis began.

The other put his fingers to his ear, and drew them away with a wag of his head.

"Yes," said he—"yes, I'm gettin' the ear-ache. Just for a little while, maybe you'd beter close your trap—now. You're only wastin' your breath,

talkin' to me. Breath, I may go so far as to say, you'll be needin' pretty badly in an hour or two."

Grinding his teeth, Lewis turned away. Then his lips parted. He turned slowly on the other.

"What was that you—" he hesitated, staring at the fat man with wide eyes. "What are you going to do with me, anyway?"

"I guess the safest thing," the other replied, between two yawns—"the safest thing for Brady and me will be to put you out of the way. I been thinkin' it over, and that's the way I size the case. What's that old line? 'Dead men tell no tales'—"

The reporter sucked in his breath.

"You wouldn't," he faltered—"you *couldn't* murder me in cold blood, for no more provocation than that I happened to be an innocent listener to a piece of business—oh, come, man, you—you're only trying to throw a scare into me so I won't give you away when you let me out of here, aren't you?"

"You ain't goin' to *get out*," stolidly announced Pete. "This ain't no kid-din'-bee, old top. I'm sorry fer you, but you gotter take old Dr. Colt's fav'rite prescription of six doses of lead—it's comin' to you. Me and Brady, we can't afford to let nobody get the goods on us. You oughter be willin' to see that. So you gotta pass in your chips—"

"And you'll pay the penalty for it in the chair, both of you!" Lewis cried. "Think of that—stop and think of the consequences. Don't you know you won't be able to get away with anything like this? You'll be caught, sure as you're sitting there. Why, when my b-body is found, as of course it will be—"

"No—that's a bum guess. It *won't* be found, bo; not a trace of it. None of your friends'll know you was croaked. They'll think you disappeared, that's all. That'll be easy to fix. There's a guy we know over in the town we come from that makes a business of gettin' rid of such stiffies as the

gang turns over, from time to time—he's a reg'lar artist at it. Don't you go to frettin' none about any harm comin' to me and Brady. *We'll* be all right. Rest easy about that."

Lewis accepted the fat man's invitation to be seated now. He dropped down on the side of the bed, his limbs rigid. This was awful.

To die like a caged rat, here in this squalid room. As soon as Brady came back—why, torture, then, was likely to accompany his decease, the reporter realized. Brady would be in a sweet mood when he returned from the fool's chase on which Lewis had sent him. He would probably want to attend to the latter's finish personally.

Lewis was utterly helpless. Without the free use of his hands, and unarmed, what chance did he stand of grappling with the fat man sitting opposite, knocking him out, and bolting through the door of that room—the room that had now become his death-cell? Not a ghost of a show on earth.

It was all up with him.

At that moment Pete sat up straight in his chair. He held his head on one side in an intently listening attitude. From the street below floated up a peculiar, quavering whistle. The fat man rose.

"Brady!" said he.

Swiftly he crossed to the room's one window. He parted the drawn shade a crack, peering down into the street. Evidently he was unable to see his confederate. A second time the whistle was repeated—imperatively now, it seemed.

Pete rolled up the shade. He lifted the sash, and popped out his head. And Lewis, who had risen from the bed like a cat, knew that here was his chance.

Creeeping forward, his manacled hands upraised, ready to deal the fat man a blow on the back of his head with the steel bracelets, he drew up behind the unconscious rascal.

"That you, Pete?" he heard a hoarse whisper from below as he came within arm's reach of the fat man.

"Look, quick, across the street—*there goes Perkins, now!*"

Lewis, staring over the shoulders of the man in front of him at the window, saw a figure moving along the opposite pavement. Just then the pedestrian came under the rays of a lighted lamp-post—and, despite the changes the years since last they met had wrought in his boyhood acquaintance, the reporter recognized him to be, indeed, no other than John S. Perkins.

Back from the window Pete bounded at that moment. He collided with Lewis, knocking him from his path as he ran to the door. Apparently oblivious of the reporter's existence, the fat man turned the key and threw the portal wide—dashing out of the room and down the stairs, three at a time.

It was only a second later that Lewis, recovering his breath, was through that same door. And he, too, made the descent of the stairs at the heels of his would-be murderer at breakneck speed.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A BODY BLOW.

LEWIS meant to put as much distance between himself and that shabby room as the speed-law would allow.

Following his former captor down the stairs, the noise of the fat man's flight being sufficient to drown the sound of the reporter's progress behind him, Lewis reached the ground-floor vestibule just as the coat-tails of the rascal ahead flapped out of sight through the street door.

A moment the reporter hesitated there in the hall. But, no; he ought to be safe in making a break from the house at once. Brady and his companion would be engrossed with the pursuit of their quarry across the street. Even if they turned and saw him leave the building they would not dare risk losing the trail of the man they wanted by putting back after him.

Striding to the front door, Lewis

managed to open it. The free air blowing on his face was like a boon from heaven. He filled his lungs. Then, running down the stoop, the reporter turned and started off in the opposite direction from his two late captors as tight as he could leg it.

A dozen yards and he brought up, with an explosion of pent breath, his hat jarred over one eye by the force of the collision, against somebody who had just then rounded the corner of the street toward which he was flying.

"Extra! Read the extra! All about the murderer! The darin' escape of the murderer in the big shoot-in' mystery! Escaped to-night, on his way to jail! Extra—paper, boss?"

The somebody into whom he had bumped was a newsboy. And the words he was crying—but Lewis was saved the necessity of trying to recall them from memory.

Just then the lad stuck a newspaper under the reporter's nose. There, in heavy type across the top of the front page, as easy to read under the light of the adjacent lamppost as if the printing had been exposed in broad day, Lewis saw the record of his own escape from the police blazoned forth for the whole town to peruse.

Swiftly he ran his eye through the detailed account that followed the bold scarehead. But of all the bare-faced, nervy jugglings with the truth that he had ever read—if this wasn't the limit!

No mention whatsoever was made of the two men who had liberated him at the gun-point. They didn't figure in this account at all.

It seemed that the two plain-clothes minions, having taken Lewis prisoner in the city room of the *Meteor*—accomplishing his capture only after a struggle beside which every other desperate hand-to-hand encounter known to history paled into sheepish insignificance—they had started with him toward the nearest lock-up, leading him handcuffed between them, through the crowded city thoroughfares, confident

that they had him completely cowed and at their mercy at last.

But the streets through which they had set out to guide their captive to the station-house were so congested at that hour—the close of day in the teeming business section—that the same thought, by coincidence, had occurred to both officers simultaneously:

What if an attempt at rescue should be made by friends of their prisoner?

As it happened—this from the story Lewis was still reading—the fellow was also the perpetrator of at least a score of daring crimes, planned and carried out in different parts of the country at various times in the past. Indeed, their captive was none other than the notorious "Silver" Bob Slade: alias a dozen additional surnames—the feared, respected and admired of every lesser criminal in the business.

Any miscreant would deem it an honor to be of service to this famous rogue. And, in the jam of people filling the street, who could tell but what a dozen crooks might even then be waiting their chance to free the master rascal from his present predicament?

Thus it had struck his captors as a wise move to steer their prisoner up a narrow and deserted alley.

They turned up this empty lane. And, hardly had they gone a quarter of a block away from thronged Nicolet Avenue, when their captive, whirling on them with incredible rapidity, started such a battle for freedom on his own account, that his previous attempt to resist capture back in the office of that newspaper seemed merely a farce by comparison.

Desperately the two detectives had fought to hold the man. One of them, it was thought, had been seriously wounded in the fray—an internal injury. But the result was foregone. The culprit shook off his captors at length. And away he fled, leaving both officers tripped and rolling over each other in the gutter—all but dead after their terrible struggle to hold the miscreant.

Well—Lewis's eyes had shifted from the print—if this effort could be beaten for an example of the height to which the gentle art of lying might be brought!

Of course it was easy enough to understand the reason Inspector Flinch and his assistant had for concocting the yarn that must have made Ananias and Baron Munchausen turn like whirling dervishes in their separate graves. They were ashamed to admit that they had been held up and robbed of their prisoner. It would put them in a more favorable light to claim that their captive had got away from them single-handed—being such a desperate character that nobody could hold him.

Just then the reporter's eye fell on the column beside the one that contained this melodramatic account of his escape. He caught his breath.

One thousand dollars had been offered for his recapture and delivery back into the hands of the police. Somewhere, the newspaper pointed out, this daring rogue must be at large in the city. All points of egress from town were still carefully watched. It was impossible that the escaped culprit could have skipped out of Minneapolis by any conceivable route. And therefore the public was advised to keep its eyes open—to be on the sharp lookout for the chance to earn a considerable sum of money.

The runaway murderer wasn't going to be hard to recognize. For, while he had broken loose from his captors and taken to his heels, nevertheless he was not quite free after all. There were those handcuffs on his wrists—it would be impossible to mistake him.

It was hardly likely that he had been able to get free of the manacles himself. To keep their advertisement of his identity from being removed unwittingly by some locksmith or other, to whom the runaway assassin might go with a smooth tale of how he happened to be handcuffed, offering to pay for having the things unlocked or chiseled off his hands—to frustrate such an at-

tempt, this newspaper printed, in a conspicuous box in the center of the first page, a list beforehand of all the speciously plausible yarns that might be given by the man to account for his shackled appearance.

Let no locksmith believe that during the performance of a "handcuff king" at one of the local theaters, a man out of the audience had gone up on the stage and allowed a pair of gyves to be locked on him—fire, or something of the kind, then breaking out, and causing him to run from the stage to the street in his semi-helpless condition. Nothing of the sort had happened at any *matinée* in town.

Nor was it to be credited that two friends, in fun, had tried an experiment with a pair of handcuffs, one locking them on the other to prove a point at argument, and then neither being able to open the things again. That would be a lie the locksmith should detect at once, from his own knowledge that handcuffs are very carefully sold, and not at all likely to get into the possession of ordinary citizens.

"Say, d'ye think I'm Andy Carnegie?"

The voice of the newsboy roused Lewis at that moment. He lowered the paper a trifle, and stared over it at the youth. With an expression of gathering disgust on his face, the latter was regarding the reporter.

"Think I'm givin' away free lib'ries?" he demanded. "If you're *all* done readin' the news-section of that paper, take a crack at the want ads. and magazine page, why don't you? Gee, don't mind me. I can wait here all night. Only thing is, when you get through readin' that sheet, give it back to me. I might be able to *sell* it to somebody else!"

Had the boy seen the handcuffs on his wrists? Swiftly Lewis looked down. No, the spread-out paper in his hands hid everything between their grasp on the edges of the extra.

His meeting with the lad had been so abrupt, and after it the reporter had

snatched the paper which hid his manacles so immediately, that the boy could scarcely have had time to spy the bracelets before they were concealed from his view.

But—here was a painful situation. Now he would have to drop the paper, the one thing that prevented the youth before him from discovering the fact that he was face to face with the identical culprit whose escape the extras under his arm was advertising. That shield would have to be lowered, either to reach for a nickel in his pocket with his cramped hands, which could not fail to reveal at least some part of his shackles, or, unable to pay for it, he must give the paper back, disclosing the truth of his plight entirely.

Lewis was surely on the horns of a dilemma. No matter what move he made, he would be equally bad off. This was tough. Pretty tough—just when he was within an ace of getting away, to be held in the toils of such an annoying predicament.

To be sure, he had only a boy to deal with. If the lad became aware of the reporter's identity, and was fired by the ambition to earn the reward that was offered in the papers he was selling for the capture of the runaway prisoner, he would be physically unable to hold him should Lewis try to bolt. Nothing was to be feared from his hands. But—there was his tongue.

If the reporter broke and ran, dropping the paper or making off with it, still concealing the fact that his wrists were bound, the youth would be certain to set up a cry, denouncing him either as the murderer at large or a thief. His vocal chords having been amply exercised in the pursuit of his vocation, there was extremely little doubt but what that cry would be a lusty one.

And so a crowd would be drawn. Lewis would surely be run down, surrounded, and then shown up in his manacles.

"Come on!" repeated the newsboy. "Give us back that paper if you ain't goin' to buy it. Hurry up!"

The reporter sparred for time.

"Er—can you change a five-dollar bill?" he asked.

The lad transferred his bundle of papers from one arm to the other. He dug deep in his pocket.

"That the smallest you got?" he said, a trace of vexation in his tone.

"The very smallest."

"Well, fork her over."

Lewis cleared his throat. That subterfuge had failed to avail him anything.

"How much do you want for the paper?" he inquired.

"A nickel," said the boy. He said it doggedly. And this gave the reporter his cue.

"Five cents!" he repeated, mustering a scowl. "Why, this is a game you're working. A bunco game. This paper is plainly marked 'price one cent'—do you think I'm blind, and can't see that? And yet you've got the nerve to ask a nickel for it!"

The lad drew back. He dropped his eyes, and let them shift guiltily along the ground.

"It's a hold-up!" went on Lewis indignantly. "By George, it's about time there was a stop put to the swindle you fellows work on the public every chance you get—whenever there's anything of special interest running in the papers. You take advantage of the general curiosity concerning this or that important case. You run through the streets, bawling and shouting, fooling people into thinking you've got something new to report, when nine times out of ten there isn't a particle of fresh news in the stale papers you're trying to palm off at five times their face value—"

Jerking the brim of his cap down over his eyes, the boy took a fresh hold on the stack of newspapers under his arm as though about to make off.

"Give us back that paper," he reiterated, holding out his hand. "You're a wise guy, ain't you? Kick all you want. I ain't asked you to gimme a nickel for it, if you don't want it."

Now it was Lewis's turn to take a backward step. With tightened grip, he still held the open sheet in his hands.

"I ought to call a cop and have you run in," he said. Sternly he searched the other's face, hoping to see an expression of apprehension appear on it, predicting flight. "That's what I've a good mind to do. Get a policeman and have you locked up. I could do it on two charges—disturbing the peace, and trying to obtain money under false pretenses. Do you know that I could have you arrested as easy as winking?"

The newsboy shrugged.

"G'wan!" said he. "You gimme back that paper, and gimme it back quick. I ain't afraid of no cop, or you neither—you nervy buttinsky!"

Lewis made a threatening move forward.

"How dare you talk that way to me?" he demanded.

The youth hastily stepped back.

"Now, you be off!" the reporter ordered. He simulated a righteous indignation to cover his satisfaction over having discovered what he believed to be an easy way out of this. "I won't pay you so much as a penny for the paper. And, what's more, I won't give it back. I'll keep it to serve you for your impertinence—and to prove that somebody sometime got the better of one of you news pirates. Get out, now, before I lay hands on you!"

But the newsboy stood his ground. Brought up in the streets, he had no overburdening respect for his elders, apparently. He spoke out of the corner of his mouth:

"Come on! You're goin' to start somethin'. Well, let's see you commence, you cheap skate—you grafter! Think I'm afraid of you? Well, I ain't. Come on—start somethin'!"

Lewis surveyed the belligerent figure before him. This tack was hopeless. He would have to begin on another. But—what other? What possible excuse could he now make to hang on to that paper any longer?

"Come on!" the youth invited. "I'm

waitin' for you to start in. Betcha I can lick you!"

Very probably the boy could, his own hands helplessly bound this way, Lewis ruefully acknowledged to himself. If only they had been free—well, the spanking he would have administered to this juvenile stumbling block in his road to liberty would have been a finished piece of work, and no mistake. But now he must rely on his wits alone to deal with the youth.

Just then the latter started forward, small chin grimly stuck out, one grimy fist doubled. And instantly the reporter fell back, collapsing limply against the lamp-post, his jaw fallen weakly open while his eyes rolled in their sockets.

Happening to glance over the boy's head the moment before, Lewis had spied the red and green lights of a drug-store of whose existence he had hitherto been unaware on the corner across the street. An idea was suggested to him.

"Son," he gasped, addressing the newsboy, who had stopped, surprised, before him. "Quick, now—answer

up! Do you want to make a dollar, easy money?"

The lad stared at him, speechless.

"Do you want to earn a dollar for just a minute's work?" Lewis persisted. He spoke thickly, and as though with difficulty, panting out the words.

The boy drew back, mingled perplexity and awe gathering in his wide-eyed countenance.

"What's the idea?" said he.

"Weak heart," the reporter breathlessly explained. "Acts up with me every once in a while. Subject to attacks like this. It's the third I've had in a week. I'm in a bad way. Run across to that drug-store over there. Go inside and get somebody—get 'em here quick. When you come back, I'll give you a dollar. Will you do it?"

Eagerly Lewis watched the newsboy's face. If only this ruse would succeed! It was his last chance.

The reporter held his breath. Was the lad going to be taken in by his dodge, or wasn't he? A minute more would tell.

(To be continued.)

### ' BEFORE HER MIRROR.

I PAUSE before her mirror and reflect—

(That's what the mirror does, I take it, too)

Reflect how little it has known neglect,

And think, ah! Mirror, would that I were you.

She has no secrets that *you* do not know,

You and this crescent box of *poudre de rose*,

And even these long curling-irons can show

Much evidence of use, yet naught disclose.

Here when she smiles *you* know it is her teeth

She's putting to the test ere she depart

For the gay revel on the lawn beneath,

Or moonlight ramble that may break a heart.

Here she may blush until she, red as wine,

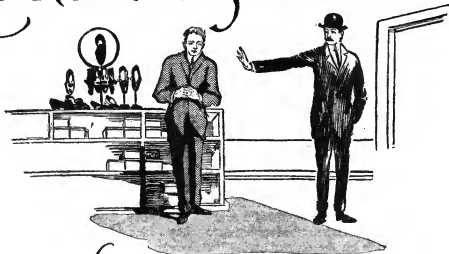
Knows that her triumphs have not ceased to be.

Here when she frowns (and looks still more divine)

You know, wise Mirror, that she thinks of me.

Tom Hall.

# The New Man's Dilemma



by Morton P. Hobs

**B**ARLOW, you haven't been doing satisfactory work at all for us of late!" The manager frowned on the young fellow who stood before him. "You haven't made a sale for three days. What kind of a showing do you call that—for a chap with your past record?"

Barlow turned red as a beet.

"When you first started in here, less than a month ago," the manager went on, "I thought you were going to make good. You began, right off the reel, by outselling every other man in the place. You beat even Graves, who has been with us a long while, and who has always been ranked as our star salesman."

He paused.

"But now you've fallen into this slump," he added. "You haven't sold a single pair of shoes in three whole days."

The young fellow opened his mouth; then closed it again.

"That's right; no excuses!" nodded the other. "Talk is cheap and re-

sults are what count. Now, I like you, Frank, and I'd like to see you stay here. But—"

At that "but" Barlow instinctively stiffened in apprehension of what was coming.

"But I warn you that unless your sales equal the rest of the boys' by next Saturday night, you'll have to hunt a new job!"

The manager swung around to his desk.

"That will do for the present," he said. "You can find something to keep you busy outside on the floor!"

Frank Barlow walked from the private office. It was early in the morning, and too soon to expect any customers, so he leaned against a shelf and gave himself up to thought.

His frame of mind was not cheerful. Threatened with discharge! And the reason why he hadn't made any sales recently was simple as A, B, C. He couldn't seem to find anybody to wait on.

There had been plenty of people in



the Bon Ton Shoe Store lately, it was true. But not one of them had been willing to have anything to do with him.

It was provoking. The way everybody who had entered the place since the first day of the week had turned away when he approached with ingratiating smile and his hands rubbing briskly together—turned away in the direction of one of the other clerks instead.

Barlow was confident that he had discovered the explanation of it, though. It was because he was a new man that nobody would make their purchases of him. Not that an outsider could detect that he had been recently hired; or that that fact would imply that he wasn't perfectly competent. But everybody who had come into the store for the last three days had been an old customer; and in the habit of being waited on by some one particular salesman.

It was because there had been such a steady stream of these "regulars" that Barlow's sales had fallen off to nothing. He had built up no clientele of patrons to come calling for him at the store. So, in consequence, the other clerks had fallen heir to all the business.

Because these same clerks, whom he had outsold by pure ability when he first came there, were now beating him even though it was by sheer luck, the manager thought Barlow's former showing had been nothing but a flash in the pan.

Barlow could have explained the facts in the case, of course. Only he had *known* that the manager was going to say what he had about "making excuses."

And Barlow didn't want to seem the sort of fellow who would try to wriggle out of a call-down through the loop-hole labeled "it wasn't my fault."

But, anyway, he wasn't going to lose his job over the thing. All he had to do was to make as many sales as the

rest of the force by Saturday night. And that was easy!

Barlow knew, without conceit, that the reason he had sold more goods when he began working at the store was because he possessed the real gift of salesmanship, plus a personality that was pleasantly appealing to a purchaser. If he had outstripped the other clerks before he could do it again. Just as soon as the situation changed, and he was on an even footing with the other fellows, he would show the manager some results that *were* results.

But, strange to say, the same condition of affairs continued that day. From morning till night there was an uninterrupted flow of people into the store who all had some apparent prejudice against letting Barlow wait on them.

Whenever a customer was ushered inside by the door-boy, and Barlow hastened forward to offer his services, he was vouchsafed but a single look, next a headshake, and then the sight of the customer's back as he sought out some one of the other men.

And what could Barlow do? He had the inclination to jump on the necks of them all and *make* them buy from him. Yet, instead, he was compelled to take each rebuff with grin-and-bear-it calm. And all the while he was marking time and not making a bit of headway toward showing his boss results.

This siege of customers with a preference for one salesman over another had continued now for four successive days. It had to end some time. To-morrow, Barlow told himself, would see the finish of it. But he was doomed to disappointment.

The next day began exactly as the others. Plenty of folks visiting the store. Indeed, a rush of business starting bright and early in the morning. But not a soul who entered the place would give Barlow the chance to sell so much as a button-hook, a pair of laces, or a couple of shoe-trees.

It was phenomenal, that was all there was to it. Why, it was unheard of that for five days straight none but old customers should come into any kind of a store. Not a solitary stranger among the lot!

By eleven o'clock, having been refused the opportunity to wait on three patrons in succession, Barlow was pretty nearly ready to quit. He had about made up his mind that he would be as well off if he stayed where he was, leaning up against a showcase at the rear of the store. Any customer who so chose could come to him, instead of his breaking his neck in a fruitless pursuit of one himself.

Could a tougher situation be imagined? Here it was Friday; not a sale had he made so far; unless his sales totaled the number that the other clerks had made by Saturday night he would be fired; and he couldn't make a move or raise a finger to sell a thing.

"Hello there, sport! Why so pensive?"

Barlow turned to see one of the other salesmen standing behind him.

"Oh, hello, Smith!" he sighed.

"Gee, what's happened to you?" the other exclaimed. "Lost a relative—or a million dollars?"

"Nothing like that, only I'm sore!"

"At what?"

"Pretty much everything. Day before yesterday I was called up on the carpet, you know."

"I didn't know it. And what was the subject of our genial manager's lecture—if you care to whisper it?"

"It was bad news. I was told there was a chance of my being bounced on Saturday night!"

"Go 'way!" ejaculated Smith sympathetically. "What have you done, for Heaven's sake?"

"It's what I haven't done," Barlow replied. "Up to Thursday morning I hadn't made a sale this week. The boss informed me, naturally, what a rotten showing he thought that was. And—"

"Cæsar's ghost!" broke in the other. "What's the matter with you?

Not a sale for three days? You don't mean it! Why, when you began here you trimmed us all; as a salesman you were the little bell-cow and no mistake. What caused the slump?"

"Slump?" cried Barlow. "Slump be blowed! Could you sell any goods if there was nobody for you to wait on? Could the manager? Could anybody? Then neither can I.

"And, since Monday morning, there hasn't been anybody come into this store that I could sell that much" (snapping his fingers) "to if my life depended on it. You other fellows have had the good luck to run into something soft, easy. Since the first of the week there hasn't been anybody come into this store who wasn't a past patron, with a favorite salesman who had waited on him before—"

"Hold on, hold on!" Smith broke in. "What's all this? What are you saying about all the folks who have called at the Bon Ton lately being old customers? Why—"

Smith drew out his order-book and flipped back the leaves.

"—beginning Monday morning I've sold fifteen—no, sixteen—pairs of shoes. I've waited on sixteen people in four days and a half. *And not one of them did I ever set eyes on before in all my life!*"

Frank Barlow fairly gasped.

"What—what's that?" he barked.

"I mean what I say," Smith went on. "If you think I've fallen in soft, through having anybody come in here to pick me out and hand me any sales on a platter, you're crazy. Crazy!"

Barlow held up an impressive forefinger.

"Those two middle-aged men who dropped in here last night," he asked earnestly. "You know the two I mean? They came in just before closing time. Do you mean to tell me that you never handled them before?"

The other nodded.

"Never saw hide nor hair of the couple until last night at five minutes to six!" he said airily.

"Well, when I went up to them," continued Barlow, "they answered my 'What can I do for you?' with a simultaneous headshake, and then both of them turned and walked right across the floor in a bee-line for *you!*"

"Well, you want me to explain it?"

"I certainly do!"

"Sorry, but I can't. I don't know why you were passed up for me. But what makes you draw the conclusion that they were old customers of mine?"

"Why—I don't know!" Barlow answered, a harried look coming into his face. "I thought that because it's what I've been thinking all week long. That's how I've accounted to myself for the way I've been turned down by everybody who has entered the place. I thought it was because I'm a new man. And now—"

He broke off and looked inquiringly at the other salesman. The latter shook his head.

"You can't prove it by me!" he said. "I tell you I've sold sixteen people since Monday, and none of them did I know from Adam. It's a safe bet that they didn't know me from E—Adam, either!"

"Great assassinated bobcats, then!" cried Barlow, "what's the matter with *me*? If it isn't because they were regular patrons of you boys that I've seen customer after customer go by me and buy goods of you all—and your case seems to prove that's not the proper solution—what is the reason that everybody has shunned me like the plague?"

Smith scratched his ear.

"Maybe you don't go up to 'em right," he suggested.

"Just what do you mean?"

"Why, maybe your approach is wrong. Perhaps you aren't onto the knack of meeting a customer. Possibly you open up with a line of talk that doesn't inspire any of 'em with the confidence that you're a good salesman to take 'em in charge. Something like that, maybe, eh?"

"What do you think I am, Smith?" Barlow demanded disgustedly. "Don't you think I ever served an apprenticeship as a salesman? Not approach them right—why, you ninny, didn't I sell goods before? Don't you admit that I sold more than any of you other fellows when I first came here?"

"Very well, then. I knew how to do it once, all right, and I haven't forgotten anything I once knew. I haven't changed my tactics. So why am I absolutely helpless even to show goods to a customer any more?"

"Well—" the other began.

"Excuse me!" Barlow cut in.

A man had just entered. With almost a gallop, Barlow dashed forward to be the first to meet the new arrival.

"Good morning, sir!" he panted. "You wanted to see something in the latest style shoe? Something up-to-date, snappy—"

He stopped. The man had looked Barlow straight in the face. And then, with an inarticulate growl, he passed by—going straight to a shoe-clerk who stood farther up the aisle, his back turned, entirely oblivious to the presence of the customer.

"How do you account for that?" Frank Barlow hissed into the ear of Smith, to whose side he returned. "What was wrong, can I ask you, with that style of approach?"

"I heard it, and it sounded all right to me!" the other replied, shaking his head in puzzled fashion. "What was it he said to *you* when he passed by to go to Hotchkiss?"

"He didn't say anything," Barlow answered ruefully. "Just growled and hurried by as though I was something unpleasant and fearful to look at. Smith—am I that?"

"What the—what d'ye mean?"

"Is there anything wrong with my looks?" Barlow demanded. "Have I sprouted a pair of horns, grown a third eye in the middle of my forehead, or changed in appearance to something weird and frightening?"

"You're nutty!"

"Am I all right?"

"As far as I see, yes. You're still the rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed home-wrecker that you've always been—"

"Thanks!" the other sniffed. "Well, if there's nothing the matter with me that fellow *must* be an old customer of Hotchkiss's. Why else should he have singled him out?"

"Let's wait," suggested Smith, "and put it up to Hotchkiss when he finishes the sale."

From the rear of the store, the two young men watched Hotchkiss fit his customer with shoes, take his money, bring back the change, and escort the buyer to the door. Then they called him over.

"Who was that chap?" Smith asked.

"Who *was* he?" repeated Hotchkiss blankly. "Why, how the deuce should I know? I never saw him in here before!"

"Barlow thought he might have been an old customer of yours," Smith explained.

"What made you think that?" and Hotchkiss turned to Frank.

In a word, Barlow informed him of all that had happened in the past four days. How nobody who came into the store would permit him to wait on them, and that he had just then been shoved aside by the man who had singled out Hotchkiss instead.

"But I'll swear I never saw the fellow before to-day!" the latter declared.

"Have you waited on any old customers since the first of the week?" inquired Barlow anxiously. "This isn't the first time since Monday that a person has refused to have anything to do with me and gone direct to you, Hotchkiss!"

"Nobody has bought anything of me," the latter answered slowly, "that I ever remember to have seen before."

Barlow swallowed hard.

"Then why have I been singled out, ostracized, boycotted, by every one?"

Hotchkiss looked him over.

"Maybe it's your hair," he said.

Frank clutched his head.

"My hair?" he echoed stupidly. "What—what on earth has that got to do with it?"

"Why, don't you see?" and Hotchkiss giggled inanely. "You're a blond. All the rest of us fellows are dark. Perhaps the people who've been coming into the store of late don't *like* men with yellow hair!"

Barlow snorted.

"You've got some great little ideas, Hotchkiss!" he said.

"That suggestion's N. G., eh?"

"Of course it is!" Frank snapped. "There might be some people with an idiotic prejudice against a man's complexion who have been in this store recently. But it's absurd to suppose that such a prejudice has been shared by every single one of them."

"Well, I only thought—" Hotchkiss began.

And then Smith interrupted.

"Cheese it!" he said. "The boss!"

The manager was just coming in through the street door. Barlow felt a wild impulse to go straight to his employer and tell him the reason for his continued inability to sell goods.

But wasn't that impulse wild? *What* could he give the manager as the reason for his ghastly dearth of sales? He couldn't tell him that he was the butt of a natural, but unfortunate, situation; a new man up against a run of old customers who shut him out to make their purchases exclusively of their favorite clerks.

For now to tell the boss that would be a lie.

Barlow felt an unpleasant prickling of his scalp as he realized what that admission of the state of affairs meant. It wasn't a preference for the other salesmen that any of the callers at the store in the last few days had felt. It was a prejudice *against* him—its cause unknown and seemingly beyond discovery.

Trying to solve the problem, he gave his thoughts to the consideration of

whether there was anything in what Smith had said about his "approach." That man who had growled at him and passed by a minute or two ago—had he done so because he was annoyed at the way in which Barlow had rushed up to him and breathlessly rattled off that salesman's lingo?

There might be some cause for his annoyance there. Perhaps that *was* why Barlow had been turned down. On the next two or three men who came in, he took pains to try a more quiet advance. To no avail, though.

Still groping for the fault with him that made his every offer to wait on a customer meet with rejection, he decided that he had been too overanxious for sales all along. That was what had been the trouble with him from the start. Being an ambitious, hustling sort of fellow, when he couldn't get a purchaser in the first few hours, he had become too zealous, and continued so every day since Monday.

His anxiety had been apparent to the people he had approached in the store. It didn't make a hit with any of them. No customer likes to feel that he is being urged too strongly, pulled and hauled into buying goods. So they had all given Barlow the go-by.

Well, he would try to remedy that. Taking up a position midway of the main aisle he waited with impassive countenance till several customers entered. As they came toward him he stayed where he was without hurrying toward them as he had done before.

It was his idea that by speaking at all before he was spoken to, he had betrayed his eagerness for business. So now he waited for somebody to come up to him and *ask* him to wait on them.

But nobody did so. With only one look, they all passed him by and bought their goods from the other clerks instead.

And why they did so was growing more unfathomable every minute.

"Smith," said Barlow, when he and the other salesmen returned from lunch that afternoon, "there is something

about me—about my appearance—that is shooing these people away. I want you to help me find out what it is. Look me over!"

He stood before his friend in the center of the coat-room floor and turned around like a clothing-store dummy on a pivot.

"Well—what is it that's wrong?" he asked.

"Believe me," said Smith sincerely, "I may be blind, and all that, but dog-goned if I can see anything the matter with you, from head to heel, at all!"

"Look at this coat!" ordered Barlow. "Is anything wrong with that? Has anybody tagged it with a 'keep off' sign?"

"Nope, nary a tag!" replied the other.

Both fell silent.

"Look here, Frank!" Smith exclaimed suddenly. "What if this is a put up job? There's nothing the matter with you. But what if somebody has told people there is?"

"What's that?"

"Suppose somebody has gone and told all the customers who have refused to let you wait on 'em that you're a good man to keep away from—that you've got smallpox, or something like that. See what I mean?"

"But such a thing is impossible!"

"How so?"

"Where," Barlow asked, "would anybody who wanted to frame up such a lie get hold of the folks who have been coming in here all week?"

Smith rubbed his chin.

"You say they've not been people who have ever been here before," Frank continued. "So how could they be reached with any story about me? Every one of them has come in right off the street. It's absurd to think they ever heard of me before they saw me!"

"Well—" the other began.

He stopped, struck by an idea.

"The papers!" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

"The papers—the daily newspapers!" Smith cried. "Perhaps this is how the customers who've turned you down were influenced against you; somebody who bears a resemblance to you may have done something dreadful—might be an escaped murderer—and his story and picture could have been printed. There might have been a theory that this outlaw had taken a job in a shoe-store. And everybody who has seen you has been afraid to let you come near them."

He slapped his thigh.

"By jinks," he chortled, "I'll bet that's it!"

Barlow scowled at him.

"Don't be an ass!" he said bitterly. "What do you think this is, some kind of thing from a story-book? Your dope about escaped murderers with their pictures in the papers bearing a likeness to me is all rot. In the first place, don't you suppose if anything of the sort had been printed, it would have been slathered through the news mighty thick? And, if there was much of such a yarn printed, wouldn't you have heard of it before now—and wouldn't I?"

He gave an exclamation of impatience.

"I tell you, Smith," he said, "you can't figure this business out along any such lines. And, by George, I don't know how you *can* go about solving it. It's a brain-twister for fair!"

The other slowly nodded.

"There isn't anything wrong with your looks," he mused, "and you haven't done anything to any of these customers, because you never met them till they were on their first visit to the store."

He folded over two fingers of his right hand.

"Next, there's none of them could be prejudiced against you beforehand by any cock-and-bull story. They couldn't be approached with any damaging report of you until they got into the store. And you've gone right up to them all as soon as they got through

the door, so you'd have seen anybody whispering to them."

He pulled down another finger.

"Yet—despite all that—not one of them will let you wait on them as soon as they get one sight of you!"

A light dawned on Smith's face.

"So," he said with a quaver of pleasurable excitement rippling through his tone—"so this is what you call a real, live mystery. And it's happening in every-day life, mind you, Barlow!"

The latter groaned.

"Don't you suppose I know it?" he said. "You can enjoy the thrill of it if you like, Smith. But *I* can't see where the situation is the least romantic or appealing. Mysteries are all right when you hear about 'em, read about 'em. But this one is happening to *me*!"

He took his head in his hands.

"And the only outcome to it I can see is that I'm going to lose my job to-morrow night!"

## II.

SATURDAY morning found the Bon Ton Shoe Store ready for the biggest day's business of the week. The clerks were bustling about, laying out the stock, scurrying here and there, and over the scene an air of prophetic activity vibrated.

Barlow, looking on in sulking idleness from his accustomed hangout, nowadays, in the rear of the place, took in the details of his surroundings with the half-conscious realization that he wasn't going to see the same fittings, companions and familiar landmarks ever again—that feeling which every one who has ever moved his home or been discharged will remember.

This was going to be Barlow's last day there.

He had gone around to all the other clerks and found out the number of sales each had made so far this week. He discovered, as a result of the canvass, that he would have to make at least twenty customers purchase goods

by six o'clock that evening to equal the lowest of the other salesmen's work.

It seemed an impossible task. But Barlow set his teeth and came out of his lurking-place as nine o'clock struck. He was a fighter from away back, he was, and he wouldn't give up till the last ditch!

Maybe the spell, whatever it was, that had kept customers away from him for five days now would break.

But it didn't.

By ten o'clock Barlow noticed that the store had filled up almost to capacity. Besides himself, of course, there was only one salesman who was idle. Now, if somebody would come in, it would have to be that other clerk or Barlow himself whom the customer would select to wait on him.

A man entered. Before the lad in uniform, who was stationed there, had had time to close the door behind this entrant, Barlow was down upon him.

"Is there anything I can do for you, sir?"

The stranger looked at him. Then his eyes roved over the busy store—and fell on the other clerk who wasn't engaged.

"No, thank you," the customer answered, passing on. "I'll just talk to that fellow over there. I guess he'll give me what I want!"

Once more! But, before he had time to vent his anger in dark thoughts over this turndown, Barlow perceived another stranger entering the front door.

Now *this* time, surely, he couldn't be sidestepped. Every last one of the other salesmen was busy.

"Good morning, sir!" Barlow greeted this second customer. "You wanted to see something in a nice shoe—"

The person glanced at him. Then he, too, looked over the shop.

"One of the other clerks," he murmured.

"Sorry, sir, but they're all busy. You'll have to take me! I'm the only one who *can* wait on you! You've—"

The customer checked his breathless speech.

"Then I'll wait till some one of them is disengaged!" he said, his jaw firm, walking over to the first row of seats and planting himself down in one.

Well!

But here came still another customer.

"Is there any particular salesman you want to have wait on you?" Barlow demanded of this man, coming up behind him.

"Why, no; any one will do!" said the latter, turning. "I just want a pair of high russet shoes in a hurry, and—"

And he turned around face to face with Barlow.

"Yes, sir, right this way!" said the young man. "I'll fix you up—"

"Er—wait a minute!" stammered the other. "I—aren't there any other clerks to attend to me?"

Barlow's chin stuck out.

"No, sir, there are *not*!" he replied. "They're every one of them busy, and there's a waiting-list!" with a vicious glance at the man who was sitting in the first row of seats.

"Well, I—I'm sorry, then!" said the fellow, backing away. "I haven't got time to wait. I—I guess I don't want to buy anything to-day, anyhow. Good morning!"

And he walked out of the store without another word.

Barlow gasped for breath. Three in a row! Not one of whom would let him have anything to do with them. Oh, it was maddening!

He walked over toward the front door to get a breath of air. He felt choking, suffocated with wrath.

But he had made up his mind; the next customer to enter the place would have to tell him what all this business meant! If he manifested my disinclination to be waited on by Barlow, then Barlow would have it out with him.

One was coming up to the door now. Barlow moved closer to the entrance to be ready to meet him.

In a minute more he'd have the satisfaction of knowing what was the matter with him, if nothing else—

Suddenly he stiffened. His eyes nearly popped out of his head. He stood where he was, rooted to the floor, and then he heaved a sigh of great, big, broad relief.

At last! He had the explanation for everything.

Turning, he ran back to the manager's office. Bursting open the door, he stood on the threshold, struggling for breath.

"Mr. Wrenn, will you come out to the front door, please, for just a minute?" he gasped.

Followed by the manager, he returned quickly to the spot near the street entrance where he had stood the moment before.

"Now, sir," he said, "watch, listen, and keep quiet, and you'll understand better than I can tell you why I haven't been able to make a sale all this week!"

Just then a customer entered the vestibule from the street. Barlow nudged his boss excitedly.

"Now—keep your ears open!" he directed.

As the man stepped up to the inner door of the vestibule "Buttons" opened the portal and bobbed out to meet him.

"Excuse me, boss!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "I'm tellin' everybody not t' have nuttin' to say or do wit' de blond salesman. Don't let him wait on youse."

The man looked down at the boy in surprise.

"What's the matter with him, bub?" he asked.

"Oh, we t'ink he's a crook!" the lad rattled off his answer. "A man was waited on by that yaller-haired salesman, see, an', after de cust'mer left, he telephoned back here to say dat he'd been robbed."

"When he paid fer what he bought here at de store, he fergot his pocket-book. Left it layin' on one o' the chairs. He accuses dis here salesman

of havin' copped de poise when he found it an' not sayin' nuttin' about it.

"De manager ast which salesman? An' de feller on de telephone says he can't tell till he comes back to de store an' looks all de cloiks over. He *tinks* it was a feller wid light hair."

"Come down to de store an' ident'fy the salesman," says the boss, 'an' we'll have him arrested.' But de man says he's goin' out o' town, but he'll be back in a week, an' if we'll keep the salesman here, not lettin' him suspect that anybody's onto him, he'll drop around an' pick him out."

"So the feller's still inside, boss. An' because we don't want nobody else to git stung by him, I'm told to warn everybody against him before they goes inside!"

The customer patted the pocket edition of Ananias on the head.

"Thank you, son!" he said. "I'm glad you put me on. I'll see that the blond salesman doesn't come too near *me*!"

He started into the store. But the manager, with Barlow at his heels, brushed him aside as they darted out and collared the door-boy.

"You little liar, you!" roared the boss. "Who put you up to that yarn you just told that gentleman?"

The lad turned pale. He tried to wriggle loose from the manager's clutch, but the latter's hand was wrapped tightly around the collar of his uniform.

"Speak, you gutter-rat!" snapped the head of the store. "What made you tell that howling lie about Mr. Barlow, so that nobody would go near him? Answer me!"

The boy began to cry. And, as the first wail hit the air, Graves, leaving his duties as salesman inside, came dashing out.

"You leave my kid brother alone!" he snarled at the manager.

"Did you put him up to tell that string of lies?" demanded his boss. "Was it you who made him place a boycott on Barlow, here?"



"Yes, it was!" sneered Graves, jerking his small brother away from the manager and hiding him behind his back. "I may as well make a clean breast of the whole thing, so long as it's all come out.

"I've always been the star salesman here. When this big piece of cheese" — nodding at Barlow — "started in and beat me I was sore, as I had a good right to be. So I framed it up that he wouldn't sell any more goods in this store. I worked out a plot and got the kid here to help me with it.

"It would have been a peach, too, if it hadn't been discovered by you at the last minute. I heard you were going to fire your new man to-night. And I'd have been glad to see him go— glad of it, you hear?"

The fellow stopped, glowering around him at the little knot of customers and clerks who had gathered in the doorway.

"Well," announced the manager, "now *he* can have the pleasure of seeing you go. Get out!" and he pointed to the street.

"I won't be sorry to quit!" Graves growled, turning back into the store for his belongings.

"And nobody'll miss you!" retorted the manager. "We've lost a sneak, not a star salesman. For Barlow will be able to take your place and your big salary."

He turned to Frank.

"That's a raise for you, my boy," he said, "and not a Saturday-night discharge!"

### A DAY IN SEPTEMBER.

WELL I remember that day in September,  
 Ever so long ago;  
 Leaves of the sumac were red as an ember,  
 Dying and yet aglow.  
 Though time we squandered, think you we pondered  
 How many miles we trod,  
 Sweetheart, the day when together we wandered  
 Gathering goldenrod?

Stubble of clover glad we trudged over,  
 Country lanes rambled through—  
 You were a gipsy, and I a glad rover  
 Happy to be with you.  
 Laughing, we gathered sprigs golden-feathered,  
 While, with assurance odd,  
 Cupid with love-knots my heart to yours tethered—  
 Tethered with goldenrod!

So strong the tether, life's fitful weather—  
 Tempest, and sun, and strife—  
 Never can loose it, and still we're together,  
 Sweetheart, helpmate, and wife!  
 Fervent let's pray, dear, some day we may, dear,  
 Feel we're as near to God  
 As we once felt on a September day, dear,  
 Gathering goldenrod!

*Roy Farrell Greene.*

# Castaways of the Year 2000



by William Wallace Cook

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE time-coupé which brought back to the year 1901 six of the twenty-one who had gone in it to the year 2000, having been destroyed by a bolt of lightning, fifteen of the number are marooned a century ahead of their own times. Meanwhile Dr. Kelpie, inventor of the coupé, has mysteriously disappeared, and Gig Lindley is arrested on the charge of having abducted him. The members of the "Relief and Rescue Society for the Castaways of the Year 2000," go to Dr. Kelpie's residence on an urgent summons from his man Chester. Here they find the Man from To-morrow, who with the time-ball, an invention of the twenty-first century, says he has come back to transport the members of the society to their friends in the year 2000. Jasper Kinch, detective, insists on Tod Plunkett's brother Jefferson accompanying them, and the five of them cover a century in ten minutes to find themselves sprawled on the floor, and the Man from To-morrow vanished. Then a door opens and none other than the missing Dr. Kelpie appears. "I am a prisoner of the era 2000," he tells them. "You are all prisoners. There is treachery afoot and little hope for any of us."

It appears that the fifteen prisoners of the twenty-first century have taken possession of the government and are running things in their own way. In seeking to escape, Everson Lumley, author of "The Possibilities of the Sub-Conscious Ego," becomes separated from the others and is rescued by Kennedy, 18, who, in company with Horton, 7, are discoursing with him about the edict of the usurpers that vaporized foods shall be replaced by the old-fashioned masticated sort. Suddenly there is the thump of an air-ship alighting on the roof. At sight of one of the two arrivals, Lumley's heart fails him as a wave of remembrance rolls over his brain like an icy flood.

## CHAPTER XII.

BY PNEUMATIC TUBE.

### MISS TIBIJUL!

Why, oh, why had he not fallen before the electric guns of the guards? Lumley asked himself. Why had he been spared to be brought face to face with the daughter of Kennedy, 18?

Lumley's dismay at that moment was somewhat tempered by surprise. Following Miss Tibijul into the

room was none other than Jefferson Plunkett!

Lumley had become acquainted with Miss Tibijul on the occasion of his first visit to the year 2000. The business of courtship in those times had been almost entirely taken over by the fair sex, and Lumley was wooed by Miss Tibijul with a dogged persistency that well-nigh drove him distracted.

Up to the last exciting moment of his previous sojourn in 2000 Lumley had been harassed by the unwelcome

Began October ARGOSY. Back numbers for sale at this office.

attentions of Miss Tibijul. Strange that he should have forgotten her, even at the time when he had found himself under her father's roof.

Somehow, as Lumley looked at Jefferson Plunkett and made note of the kindly consideration with which the lady favored him, his fears began to wane.

Plunkett seemed entirely disorganized. There was a blank look in his face and an uncertain light in his eyes. Miss Tibijul took his hand and led him to a couch.

"Poor man," she murmured commiseratingly, "you're all unstrung, and no wonder. Do sit down and rest. You are perfectly safe here."

Plunkett turned upon her a vacant stare. He did not speak, but slowly lifted a hand and drew it across his forehead. Gently Miss Tibijul pushed him down on the soft cushions behind him. He submitted passively.

"Daughter," cried Kennedy, 18, in consternation, "what does this mean? We are already courting destruction by harboring one of the escaped hostages, and now, unless my eyes deceive me, you bring in another."

"I saved him," answered Miss Tibijul proudly and a bit defiantly. "I was out for an afternoon fly in the Beetle, and I saw this poor gentleman below, a number of guards with electric guns pursuing him closely. I dropped down and took him aboard."

"And the guards got the number of your air-ship, I presume?" chided her father. "A pretty situation, I must say, Hortense! The dictators will be after us, and so will our own people. But there's no use arguing with a woman. Who is this man?"

"Jefferson Plunkett, father. You are mistaken about our danger being increased by what I have done. This gentleman is the brother of the chief dictator. In rescuing him this afternoon I have won for all of us here the gratitude of our worst enemy. We—"

The lady's words faded from her lips. She had been taking a survey of

the room, and her eyes began to snap and sparkle behind the boxlike spectacles that covered them.

"Well, dear me!" she exclaimed, stepping forward with outstretched hand. "Here is my old friend, Ever-son Lumley, back again from the other century. The times have changed for the worse, Mr. Lumley, since you honored us with your first visit."

It was merely a friendly pressure which Miss Tibijul gave Lumley's hand. He experienced a tremendous relief. After all, the lady had had only a passing fancy for him, and it was plain that the fancy had gone, never to return. Lumley's heart expanded with hope.

"I am glad to see you again, Miss Tibijul," he said, "and—"

"Miss Hortense Kennedy, 18," the lady interrupted. "Edict No. 2612 by the dictator of customs changed every name in New York."

"I wish to thank you, Miss—er—Kennedy," Lumley proceeded, "for saving Mr. Jefferson Plunkett. We were all quite worried about him."

"As soon as I took him aboard the Beetle he asked me to hurry to Forty-Second Street Station. What did he mean?"

"He is an incredulous person," explained Lumley, "and refuses to believe that he has been transported from 1901 to the following century."

"I knew something was wrong with him," declared Miss Kennedy. "He needs the gentlest treatment, or the shock of full realization will unbalance his mind."

She went over and sat down on the couch beside Plunkett.

"Don't you understand, Jefferson," she cooed, "that nearly a hundred years have passed since yesterday?"

Plunkett lifted his hands and felt wonderingly of the upthrust braids capped with the gaudy ribbons. Then suddenly he broke into a maudering laugh.

"What a funny dream!" he exclaimed.

As Miss Kennedy drew back, impelled by some unpleasant inference drawn from the words, Plunkett arose and let his eyes wander about the room. The shadows had begun to fall, and Horton, 7, passed to a table and uncapped the tin of condensed light he had brought with him into the room. A sunny glow diffused itself about the place, and Plunkett rubbed his double chin thoughtfully.

"H-m," he mused, "can you beat it? Chased by guards with electric guns, picked up by something out of a comic supplement, carried off in an air-ship, brought down through the roof-door of a house, and now some one illuminates by opening a tin can! *Ouch!* This is getting so deuced serious that it hurts. Wonder if I'm going dippy? Wish I could get an expert medical opinion."

Lumley, prompted by a generous instinct to reassure a distressed mind, came forward.

"Mr. Plunkett," he asked, "don't you remember me? Don't you—"

A wild bellow came from Plunkett.

"Know you?" he cried thickly. "Don't you think for a minute, by James, that I'll ever let you slip out of my mind. You're here, and you're alone; I guess that's enough for me."

With that he bore down upon Lumley, his face black with anger and his fat fists clenched. Miss Kennedy screamed and wrung her hands. Horton threw a chair in front of Plunkett, over which he tripped and went crashing to the floor. Kennedy seized Lumley by the arm.

"Come with me, Lumley," he whispered excitedly. "The man will kill you if I don't get you out of the way."

Lumley regretted the circumstances while yielding to the force of them. Giving himself into Kennedy's hands, he was conducted into a dark passage, and finally into a sleeping apartment. Here Kennedy pressed a button which opened electrically a can of light fixed in a wall-socket; and then he closed and secured the door.

Greatly perturbed, he walked up and down the room, while Lumley dropped upon the bed and reclined there to await further developments.

"There is no peace, no happiness for any of us since those dictators have been promulgating their decrees," said Kennedy finally, coming wearily to a halt and facing his guest. "Nothing goes as it should; even the ordinary course of events continually develops one thing after another to keep a New Yorker of the period in a nervous condition. Everything is being changed, and changed for the worse."

Lumley had a soft heart, and felt keenly for his friend. There was little that he could say, however, and so he held his peace.

"When you were here before, Lumley," pursued Kennedy, "muglugs did all the work for us. We had house muglugs, factory muglugs, air-ship muglugs, and so on, so that it was necessary for us simply to speak and our orders were obeyed by tireless automations of steel. Now these drudges have been taken away from us, and we are obliged to work with our own hands.

"I, even I," and his voice filled with bitterness, "have my back yard filled with pig-iron, and am compelled to manufacture rain-plugs for the weather department. This manual labor is sapping the life out of me. Unless there is a change very soon I shall pine away under my misfortunes. This latest edict from the food department caps a climax. I cannot offer you supper, Lumley, for there is not a particle of vaporized food in the house; and I would not give you any if there were. To-morrow morning I shall try and have a breakfast according to the ancient culinary standards, but I cannot promise you anything even passable. My chef, Brown, 206, has one of these cook-books the dictators have forced on us, and the mere reading of half a dozen recipes sent him into a swoon. So I have my doubts about that morning meal.

"Now, friend Lumley, there are a great many things I must talk with you about—and not the least of these pressing topics is this man Jefferson Plunkett and his hostile attitude toward you—but I am in no condition this evening to discuss matters of importance. To-morrow, if you please, we will consider your case in all its bearings. Meantime, let me urge you to get a good night's rest. You are obliged to go supperless to bed, but the dictators are responsible for that."

He moved toward the door.

"Horton and I will take care of Plunkett," he went on, "but it will be just as well for you to lock the door after me."

"I'm obliged to you, Mr. Kennedy," said Lumley, "for your kindness to me. Before I try to rest, though, I'd like to pick up a few transmits about my scattered friends. I'm badly worried, and—"

"The information regarding your friends is incomplete and unsatisfactory," interrupted Kennedy. "Probably it will be to-morrow morning before we can secure anything definite. Have courage and patience, Lumley. Those on our side won't dare do anything desperate, and of course your friends have nothing to fear from the dictators. Good night, my friend."

Kennedy passed from the room, and Lumley locked the door behind him and went to bed.

On his previous visit to those luxurious times every household had muglugs for menials. Each guest had a dapper little muglug valet to serve him, and throughout the establishment there were steel servants to fetch and carry. Lumley was having the striking changes in the year 2000 brought home to him in a most telling manner, and his mind dwelt upon the subject for an hour or two before he went to sleep.

At last he dropped over the edge of consciousness and began swimming through a sea of dreams. Now he was confronting electric guns that belched their thunderbolts in his face, and now

he was frantically pursuing the time-ball and the chain of a hundred links through frightful centuries.

Again, he was tormented by the amazonian attentions of Miss Tibijul, otherwise Hortense Kennedy, or was strapped in the iron chair of the thinkograph, or was battling to the death with Jefferson Plunkett. The fight with Plunkett came along at the end of his dreaming. He had struck at the fat hardware salesman and missed; with a taunting laugh, the salesman had let drive at him with conspicuous success. The blow landed with a crash, and Lumley's ears were still ringing as he opened his eyes.

He discovered that he was sitting up in bed with fists doubled. It was broad daylight, and he drew a long breath of relief as he realized that he had been the victim of a nightmare. Then, the next moment, he realized, too, that some one was pounding on his door.

"Lumley! Wake up, Lumley!"

It was the voice of Kennedy, and was fairly crackling with excitement.

"What's wanted?" inquired Lumley.

"Let me in—hurry! You're in danger, Lumley!"

Lumley rolled out of bed and made haste to open the door. Kennedy, very much out of breath, staggered across the threshold. His face was ominous, and Lumley's heart sank.

"What has gone wrong, Kennedy?" he gasped.

"Jefferson Plunkett has been using the transmit," panted Kennedy. "Horton showed him how to use the thought-waves, and Plunkett sent out word, broadcast over the city, that you were being harbored in my house. The man must be crazy! Get into your clothes, Lumley, as quickly as possible."

This last admonition was useless, for Lumley was already pawing wildly at his garments. Kennedy helped him.

"What am I to do?" faltered Lumley.

"I haven't been able to think of anything, as yet," was the response. "I'm

hoping that some of the muglug army will get here before the guards, and that—"

Kennedy paused. A thump on the roof announced the alighting of an airship. A moment more and the voice of Horton came piercingly from a distance:

"The guards are here, Kennedy! The house is surrounded and a detachment has just landed on the roof-staging and captured Plunkett!"

Just then Horton showed his wild face in the door.

"Better surrender, Lumley," he advised; "there's really nothing else to be done."

"I'll not surrender him!" flung back Kennedy. "Come on, Lumley; don't stop to put on your shoes."

With a shoe in each hand Lumley bolted after his host. Out in the hall they could hear the scuffling footsteps of the guards, racing through the rooms in a furious search.

"This way," whispered Kennedy, and made off along the passage.

An exultant cry came from somewhere in the rear.

"They see you!" exclaimed Horton. "You are mad, Kennedy, to try to—"

The words were lost. Kennedy had rushed through a door, jerked Lumley after him, and then slammed the door and shot a bolt.

"An idea!" murmured Kennedy. "I can save you, Lumley, but we shall have to be quick."

"Save me?" echoed Lumley, in a panic. "How?"

"This is the pneumatic tube-room. From this point we send and receive packages from all over the city. Here!"

He stepped to one side of the chamber. In the wall, some two feet from the floor, was a round opening closed with a metal disk. Above the disk was a transmit-knob. Just below the disk was a trestlework topped with a bed of small rollers. Upon the rollers lay a cylinder, six feet long by eighteen inches in diameter.

The cylinder was pointed at each end and halved and hinged lengthwise so that the upper half opened like a lid. The long lid was thrown back and Lumley could see that the cylinder was empty.

"Get into it!" instructed Kennedy sharply.

"Get—into it?" repeated Lumley, recoiling.

"Yes! It's your only chance. Be quick!"

Lumley climbed to the staging and squeezed himself into the cylinder. There was plenty of room up and down but a tight fit across. Kennedy, meanwhile, was striking the transmit-knob.

"Well?" came a voice.

"A hundred and thirty pounds of rain-plugs for the weather bureau," called Kennedy. "Rush order."

"The way is clear. Load the rain-plugs into the tube."

Kennedy pulled a lever. The circular disk vanished and revealed the maw of a black opening. With a smothered exclamation Lumley sat up in the steel shell.

"What are you going to do with me, Kennedy?" he asked, tremulously.

"Send you to your friends by pneumatic tube," was the answer.

"But I'd rather not go to my friends in that way. I—"

A rain of blows dashed against the closed door and a clamor of voices demanded the surrender of Lumley. With a hollow groan Lumley fell backward and wedged himself into the cylinder.

Swiftly Kennedy closed the cover and clamped it down. An awful feeling of helplessness and peril took possession of Everson Lumley. What if the cylinder should get blocked in the tube? How long would the air inside the steel shell support life? Suppose that—

But he gave over his direful suppositions abruptly. The rollers were turning beneath the cylinder and he felt that he was moving forward into the hole in the wall. A roar of air in

violent suction filled his ears. A second later his head was driven into the rear point of the cylinder as he started suddenly and rushed at the weather bureau like a bullet from a gun.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### MILES JERNYNHAM, WEATHER DICTATOR.

LUMLEY was too dazed to note when or how the cylinder came to a pause. He was conscious of some one working at the upper half of the shell and was presently blinking in a bright light as the lid was thrown back. He heard a yell of consternation and a patter of running feet; then an excited voice:

"Mr. Jernyngham! Mr. Jernyngham!"

"Hush that clamor, Simpson, 5," came a second voice, and one of authority. "What's the row, anyway?"

"Come here, please, Mr. Jernyngham! There are no rain-plugs in that cylinder from Kennedy, 18."

Lumley heard a rumble of anger from Jernyngham and a movement in his direction. He sat up. Jernyngham and Simpson, 5, were close. Jernyngham recoiled and Simpson gave another yell and pressed fearfully back against the wall.

"Suffering cyclones!" exclaimed Jernyngham, recovering himself. "Everson Lumley, or I'm a Hottentot!"

"Good morning, Miles," said Lumley, cheerfully. "I've just had a narrow escape. You see, the guards were after me and Kennedy had to load me into the cylinder and fire me through the tube. How are you?"

Miles Jernyngham embraced his unexpected guest with great ardor.

"We'll remember Kennedy for that!" he declared. "Confound that bloomer brigade, anyhow! There's no rime or reason in the way they're acting. But they'll get enough of it before we're done with them. Tickled to death to see you, old man! Come into the office and tell me all about it."

Lumley fished his shoes out of the cylinder and turned to follow the weather dictator out of the tube-room.

"Get a grip on yourself, Simpson," laughed Jernyngham as he passed his assistant. "I don't wonder that you were taken aback when you looked for rain-plugs and found my old friend, Everson Lumley. Sun's hot in Syracuse and they want a few clouds. As soon as they shoot in a hundred dollars, push a couple of cloud-plugs into the Syracuse section."

"Very well, sir," answered Simpson, slowly recovering his mental poise.

The way from the tube-room to the office carried Lumley and the dictator through a large chamber in which three meek-looking men of the period were at work.

A large map of the State of New York had been split into three sections and fastened to three blank walls. Every town, village, and crossroads was plainly marked, and the entire surface was gouged with holes. Some of these holes were empty. Others were filled with round-headed plugs of different colors.

On his way through the room Jernyngham paused and cast a critical eye over one of the sections.

"I guess you'd better pull out that Steuben County plug, Arnold, 31," said he. "We've already given them more rain than they've paid for. And I want you to be more careful with the gale-plugs, Arnold. Herkimer County didn't whack-up for that last spell of fair weather, and I told you to switch in one gale-plug and you switched in two. I just heard that you unroofed three stores in Coldbrook and blew over a steeple in Fairfield. Be a little more careful or you'll get your walking-papers."

Jernyngham passed on into the office and closed the door after Lumley.

"It's a great graft, Lumley, this weather business, grinned Jernyngham, in high good humor, as he motioned his guest to a chair.

"H-m," said Lumley, sitting down

and beginning to get into his shoes, "is it right, Miles, to make a graft of it?"

"Why not? Before we took hold the weather business was in the hands of a trust. We've driven out the trusts, cornered the muglugs and set the people to work. We charge only half what the trust charged for weather, and everybody ought to be satisfied."

"Glad to hear you have cut the prices, but driving out one trust and replacing it with another isn't just the thing, is it? And in the case of a public necessity, like the weather, shouldn't the government have control?"

"That's what it has," grinned Jernyngham; "we're the government in the State of New York. But we won't discuss this at present. I'm hungry and was just going to have breakfast. Join me, and we'll talk as we eat. Simpson, 5!" he shouted.

Simpson appeared in the door of the chart-room.

"Double that breakfast order," said Jernyngham. "Two portions ham and eggs. By the way, Lumley, how do you like your eggs?"

"Turned over," answered Lumley, brightening with pleasant anticipations.

"Remember that, Simpson, 5," went on Jernyngham. "Double up on the fried potatoes, the buttered toast and the coffee. Also lay covers for two, for I have," and here he gave a droll wink, "a hundred and thirty pounds of rain-plugs to breakfast with me."

Simpson smiled faintly and withdrew. Jernyngham lifted his feet to the top of his desk and tilted back comfortably in his office-chair.

"We kept track of you fairly well yesterday by means of the transmits," said he, "up to the time you vanished in Kennedy's back yard. What happened to you after that?"

Lumley recounted his experiences. As he talked he watched Simpson setting a table with white linen, blue china and shining spoons and cutlery. These preparations, in view of the fact that he had had a "vaporized" dinner the

day before, and no supper, cheered him tremendously. Throughout the recital Jernyngham gave Lumley his absorbed attention.

"Whew!" exclaimed the weather dictator, when the story was done, "you fellows did have a time of it, and no mistake. Smith, 2006, was a pestiferous person, and I am glad he has been put out of the way. But your situation, Lumley, was not so perilous as it appeared. Those guards would never have dared to annihilate you with their electric guns. They knew too well that the vengeance of the dictators would be swift and sure."

"If you men have the whole city under your control," asked Lumley, "how is it possible for any of the citizens of the period to defy your authority?"

"That was because they had Dr. Kelpie," explained Jernyngham. "They used the doctor as a club, threatening him with death if we did not give up the important posts we occupy. Finding their threats would not intimidate us, Smith, 2006, used the doctor's time-machine to go back into the past after more of you fellows. The situation was becoming pretty serious, and Jerry Dicks evolved that plot to help you escape. We know, now, why you anticipated Dicks's activities. Of course, we're not out of the woods yet, by a long shot, but we're going to hang on to our powers and prerogatives. It's great, Lumley, for a bunch of year 1900 men to boss this year 2000! If you had a hand in the game you'd know how we feel."

"You'll have to leave these times, Miles," said Lumley. "We came to rescue you and you've got to go back with us."

Jernyngham shook his head.

"Don't you believe it! We're doing a splendid work here, and Tod Plunkett is planning to extend our power over the whole country. We'll never leave, Lumley."

"But what will happen to Gig Lindley?" cried Lumley.



"I guess he will have to be sacrificed. The greatest good for the greatest number is our slogan."

The horror Lumley felt was too deep for words. But it was not a time to argue the point, for he was hungry, and a hungry man's mind is not at its best.

"Where are the rest of our friends who escaped with me?" he inquired.

"McWilliams and Lindley were picked up by an air-ship belonging to the department of customs; Kinch and Mortimer were rescued by a detachment of muglugs under command of Jerry Dicks. Now that you and Jefferson Plunkett are accounted for, the only man missing is Dr. Kelpie. I presume that he and Plunkett are in the hands of the guards."

At this moment Simpson began bringing in a number of covered dishes and placing them on the table. The appetizing odor he brought with him was most delightful. His final act was to place half a dozen cigars in the center of the table and push up a couple of chairs.

"All ready, sir," he announced.

"Come, Lumley," said Jernyngham, and got up and started toward the table.

Lumley was smiling and rubbing his hands. He was very certain that never in his whole life had he been so nearly famished as he was at that moment.

They paused on their way to the table, startled by cries from the chart-room. Before Jernyngham could investigate the cause of the commotion, a short, fat man came puffing through the office door.

His face was red and his little eyes glimmered. In one hand he held a small revolver, of the ancient 1900 pattern, and he fanned the point of it back and forth so that it covered impartially Jernyngham, Lumley, and Simpson.

"Stand where you are!" he commanded in a stuffy, determined voice.

"Jeff—Jefferson Plunkett!" whispered Lumley, astounded.

"Yes," answered the man with the weapon, a deadly menace in his tones,

"Jeff Plunkett, on the road for Lockett & Biggs, hardware. This is a sample gun that I happened to find in my pocket. There are five lives in the cylinder, by James! Don't forget that. Sif down!"

"But I say, Plunkett," began Jernyngham, "we were about to—"

"Sit down!" exploded Plunkett, wrathfully.

Simpson did not wait to find a chair, but wilted to the floor. Jernyngham and Lumley backed warily to the seats they had just vacated and dropped into them again.

Still watching the three, Plunkett moved to the table, took a chair facing them and rested the elbow of his gun-hand on the white linen.

"Now, listen," he went on. "I'm going to have a square meal, and you are going to stay right where you are and watch me eat it. If one of you makes a move, or speaks a word before I light a cigar, there'll be fireworks. I don't know a thing about electric guns and thunderbolts, but Buffalo Bill himself hasn't anything on me when it comes to juggling a revolver."

Cautiously Jefferson Plunkett laid the weapon beside his plate and proceeded to relieve the very large famine that had afflicted him for twenty-four hours. Lumley watched him wistfully, even if a little fearfully, while Jernyngham looked on with humorous resignation.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS.

JEFFERSON PLUNKETT made a clean sweep of everything on the table. Double portions of ham and eggs, fried potatoes, and toast vanished from before him like magic.

As the food disappeared his complacency grew. When the plates were empty he selected a cigar, sniffed at it with the fastidiousness of a connoisseur, smiled gratefully and lighted it;

then, very coolly, he appropriated the rest of the cigars and stowed them away in his pockets.

"Take it from me, gentlemen," said he, "that I have just experienced the pleasantest part of this little dream. My mind is beginning to smooth itself out and have a few lucid intervals. It's a cinch that this situation is too many for me, and it's another cinch that I was shanghaied and pushed into it against my will. From now on I shall demand what I need and enforce my demands with this sample of Locket & Biggs's goods."

He picked up the revolver, patted it affectionately and dropped it into his coat-pocket.

"You may now," he added, "indulge in any conversation that seems appropriate."

Simpson, 5, had slipped from the room while Plunkett was lighting his cigar. He now, very warily, thrust his head in at the door.

"Dust is flying in Buffalo, Mr. Jernyngham," he announced, "and they are asking for a hundred-dollar sprinkle. Also a request comes from the Mohawk Valley for a thousand dollars' worth of soaking rain."

"Very good," nodded Jernyngham. "As soon as you hear from the treasury that Buffalo and Mohawk Valley have remitted, see that the sprinkle-plug is switched in for a twenty-minute precipitation at Buffalo, and that Mohawk Valley is lined with rain-plugs for a two-hours' downpour."

"Yes, sir."

Simpson disappeared. Plunkett grabbed the edge of the table, stared at Jernyngham, and his lower jaw fell. His cigar dropped into a plate. After a moment he mumbled to himself, picked up the cigar absently and resumed his smoking.

"Just as I'm beginning to feel tolerably comfortable," said he, "something like this has to happen."

"Mr. Plunkett," spoke up Lumley, "this gentleman is Miles Jernyngham, of the weather bureau."

Plunkett acknowledged the introduction with a scowl and a nod. Jernyngham lifted his voice and called for Simpson.

"Duplicate that breakfast order, Simp," said he, "and see how quick you can do it."

He turned to Plunkett.

"Lumley and I," he went on, "had just made up our minds that you had been recaptured, so your appearance here was in the nature of a pleasant surprise. How did you get away from the guards?"

"Miss Kennedy attended to that," answered Plunkett. "She dropped me through a grating in the dining-room and then led me up to the roof in a roundabout way. There we boarded the family flier. Miss Kennedy let me off on top of the weather bureau and told me to go down and look for friends."

A derisive smile dug creases in the drummer's face.

"And I don't think," he finished, "that I gave you a pleasant surprise when I showed up here; it was a surprise, all right, but the pleasure was mostly mine."

"I've got to hand you a piece of my mind, Mr. Plunkett," observed Jernyngham, "and I might as well do it right now. I hope you'll take it kindly, but you've got to take it, whether kindly or no."

"Your conduct toward those who came with you to these times has been most reprehensible. You seem, Plunkett, to be constantly on the lookout for opportunities to betray your companions into the hands of their enemies. Now, we're a little band of cast-aways who, by our native shrewdness and ability, have succeeded in getting a strangle-hold on our environment. We've got to hang together, understand? Eternal vigilance is the price of our success. Your brother, Tod, is the boss dictator, and on his account, if for no other reason, you ought to be with us rather than against us."

If Plunkett was impressed with these

blunt remarks he failed to show it. He listened to Jernyngham with a derisive smile.

"I'm jerry to this, all right," said he, "that everything *seems* and that nothing really *is*. I've been doped, and when I come to you can bet your bottom sou marquee that I'm going to make things hot for the bunch that worked the hocus-pocus. When I wake up I want to have the satisfaction of knowing that I plugged for my side even while I was under the influence of that funny powder. Just at present I'm little Alice Plunkett in Wonderland, and I'm very, very busy hunting a way back to Common-sense Junction, where I got off. Meanwhile, I'm going to be as obstreperous as I can."

Simpson came in, and began clearing away the table. Lumley watched him with interest and impatience. In fact, he was so wrapped up in the prospect of that delayed breakfast that he could not feel properly aggrieved at the stand taken by Jefferson Plunkett.

Jernyngham had it in mind to be very severe—there was no doubt at all about that—but before he could vent his indignation upon Plunkett something else happened. A door opened and closed. Footsteps were heard approaching hurriedly. There was another flurry of excitement in the chart-room; and then—Jasper Kinch flung himself into the office.

"Ah, Lumley!" Kinch exclaimed. "Glad to see you, Jernyngham. Excuse brevity, but I'm in the biggest kind of a rush. Got an air-ship on the roof, and just dropped in for a moment to have a word with Lumley. I'm trying to corral all of our crowd at the office of the chief dictator. Mortimer, Ripley, and McWilliams are there, and Lumley is to join them at once. I'm off to get Dr. Kelpie."

"How did you know I was here?" inquired Lumley.

"The news came by transmit from Kennedy, 18."

"Have you found Dr. Kelpie?"

"We've heard from him. The information was brought by one of the guards, who was bribed by the doctor. Kelpie was recaptured, but while he was free he managed to hide the time-ball; now he's back in the old quarters in Amsterdam Avenue, with the guards doubled, and they're going to use the thinkograph on him and discover where he secreted the main part of the time-machine. We've got to prevent that. Dicks is marching a strong force of muglugs at the double-quick to the Kelpie house, and I'm needed there to direct proceedings. I—"

A sound of quick movement drew all eyes toward the office door. Jefferson Plunkett was just making a hasty exit.

"Come back here!" shouted Kinch.

"Be hanged to you!" flung back Plunkett, looking around and flourishing his revolver. "Try to stop me and I'll shoot. You'll not get the time-ball—I want it myself."

He slammed the door, leaving those in the office staring at each other in apprehension and dismay.

"Confound the fellow!" grunted Jernyngham. "Not that this time-ball counts for much, so far as the dictators are concerned, but—"

"It counts for more than you know!" cried the exasperated detective. "I wish I'd brought that electric gun. As it happens, I haven't a weapon of any sort; but I'll not let that stand in the way."

With that he flung open the door of the chart-room. The operators were huddled in one corner, like a lot of frightened sheep. Through the open door of the tube-room Jefferson Plunkett could be seen puffing and floundering on the flight of iron stairs that led to the roof.

Followed by Lumley and Jernyngham, Kinch plunged on in fierce pursuit. By the time the three reached the foot of the stairs Plunkett was out of the roof-door, and by the time the pursuers reached the roof the machine that had brought the detective was on the

wing, Plunkett balanced amidships and covering the pilot with his revolver.

As he slipped swiftly away into space the hardware drummer gave vent to a wheezy, taunting laugh.

"If he gets that time-ball," cried the panic-stricken Lumley, "he'll destroy it. He doesn't know, he doesn't understand—"

"We've got to overhaul him!" exclaimed Kinch. "Where's another flying-machine? I say, there, Jernyngham! We've got to have another machine."

Jernyngham was hauling a red flag to the top of a short staff.

"I'm signaling for a municipal flier," said he. "Ah, ha! there's one now, heading this way."

The municipal machine, which paid a license to the air-ship department and was for hire, rounded gracefully to a pause above the roof and then settled down into the stays. Kinch and Lumley ran up the steps and clambered aboard.

"Follow that craft!" shouted Kinch, pointing south toward the other air-ship.

The pilot started his helicopters; and then, when they were swinging well over the roof, turned on the propellers.

"We'll double-cross this little game of Plunkett's," declared the detective, with grim determination. "By what process of reasoning has he convinced himself that he can get that time-ball, anyhow? Why, he's plain crazy, there is no doubt of that."

"He's plain troublesome, Jasper," returned Lumley, "and he seems to have a way of doing the wrong thing with a good deal of success. 'Plunkett, the avenger,' is surely an appropriate name for him. I have awful forebodings that he is on the point of doing something rash—something that will result in a tremendous catastrophe."

"You forget," frowned Kinch, "that Plunkett is matching wits with *me*."

Thereupon he broke off the conver-

sation, gave attention to the chase, and urged the driver to crowd on more power.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FRESH DIFFICULTIES.

Two things were evident to those in the municipal flier. One was that the driver was doing everything possible to get the best speed out of the machine, and the other was that they were barely holding their own in the chase.

"We're overloaded," said the driver.

"You're a man of the period," cried Kinch fiercely, "and on peril of your life tell me the truth: Are you for or against the dictators? Is there any reason for you to keep this air-ship back?"

The driver shivered under the deadly menace of the detective's voice and look.

"I've no quarrel with the dictators," he whimpered. "If I had, why should I hold this machine back? The man we're chasing is one of your crowd. I tell you, sir, we're overloaded."

Kinch appeared convinced of the driver's sincerity. Never slow in making up his mind, he had planned the next step before the pilot had done speaking.

"Hover over that roof, ahead there," he ordered, pointing. "Stop, but don't land. Come to a standstill two or three feet above the landing-stage."

"Very well, sir."

"Sorry, Lumley," said Kinch, "but the craft is overloaded, and you'll have to drop out on that roof and wait until I finish the chase and come back and pick you up. But be sure and wait. All of our crowd must be got together, and kept together. I'll bag Plunkett, and we'll halt his troublesome career by keeping him bound and under lock and key. By lightening ship we shall be able to overhaul the craft ahead."

Lumley was disappointed, but he had the utmost confidence in Kinch,

and promptly fell in with his plans. The helicopters were holding the municipal machine a few feet above the landing-stage of the strange roof-top. Lumley climbed over the side, lowered himself to arms' length, and dropped. He landed lightly, easily, and then watched while the air-ship resumed the chase.

"I hope nothing goes wrong," he said to himself, turning to the edge of the platform and descending a short flight of steps to the roof. "If the time-ball falls into the hands of our enemies, there's no telling where our troubles will end."

His worries on the score of Dr. Kelpie and the time-ball had caused him to forget for the time being that he had been deprived of the morning meal, of which he stood very much in need. Now that he had been eliminated from the chase and its attendant excitement, his mind returned wistfully to the subject of his lost breakfast.

A sort of pergola, hard by the landing-stage and offering a shelter of flowering vines, invited him. He entered its cooling shadow and sat down on a cushioned bench. By a supreme effort of the will he sought to banish visions of ham and eggs, fried potatoes, toast, and coffee. As a means to the end, he steered his thoughts in other channels.

It was clear that the members of the Rescue Society were going to have a hard time prying the dictators loose from their powers and prerogatives and carrying them back into the past. Yet it must be done in some way. They had no moral right to tyrannize over the folks of the twenty-first century.

People of different ages are differently constituted. How would the people of the year 1901 have felt if some usurpers had come on from the year 1800, banished the telegraph for the post-rider and retired incandescent bulbs in favor of tallow-dips? No, no! Surely a man has no right to any other era than that in which he is born.

The castaways, perhaps not mali-

ciously, were perpetrating a great wrong; and Lumley was grieved to note that a sordid spirit had entered into their operations, and that they were manipulating the weather, the culinary operations, and no doubt everything else, for their own financial benefit. This was—

Lumley's reflections were cut short. What was that he heard? A groan? He started to his feet and listened intently.

Yes, there was no mistake. Here was something that demanded investigation.

Midway of the pergola's length was the built-up hood that sheltered the roof-door. Lumley observed that the door was ajar, and he was not long in determining that the gruesome sounds he had heard were wafted through the opening.

Cautiously he advanced to the door, pushed it wide, and stepped through. Descending the broad stairway a short distance, he looked over the balustrade, and an odd scene revealed itself to him.

The room into which he had partly descended was the triclinium, or dining-room, of the household. It was a very rich apartment, with walls frescoed by the hands of some master artist, and with chairs and couches upholstered in the costliest fabrics. The grating, through which the food vapors were wont to ascend, was of yellow gold wrought out in an intricate and graceful design.

On one side of this grating stood a table—a breakfast-table, as it were—brought from some peasant's hut and put down in those luxurious surroundings. It was covered with a paper cloth, and the dishes were of tin, evidently designed for other uses and pressed into service by sudden necessity.

There was a bowl-shaped dish half full of a dark liquid. At half a dozen places around the board were plates heaped with food—a sort of food Lumley could not remember ever having seen before. Six chairs were

pushed back from the table. Those who had been eating were lying on couches, or were writhing in chairs, filled with a misery that found vent in heart-wrenching groans.

Lumley grasped the situation in a moment. This was the result of decree 3165. These people of the period were trying to carry out the terms of the new law. For years they had sat at their golden grating, conversing pleasantly and absorbing their nutrition. Now they were trying to eat the solid, non-vaporized, non-deodorized food, and the result could not be other-wise than painful.

Lumley's heart went out to the sufferers, even as his indignation waxed strong against the dictators. It was a brutal decree. Famished as he was, however, the sight of that breakfast tempted him. Not one of the six members of the household paid him the slightest attention, and he descended quietly, drew up one of the chairs, and sat down at the table.

He picked up a fragment of something, tried to determine what it was by sight, and then by taste. It was hard and soggy and burned. He dropped it. Yes, he was hungrier than he had ever been in his life, but he couldn't go that.

"Eat it," commanded a hollow voice. "It is called bread in the 1900 cookbook. You are from those distant times, and we ask a demonstration. Prove to us that the stuff is edible."

Lumley looked up. The man of the house evidently was standing before him. His absurd costume in nowise diminished the touching spectacle he presented. The pinched face and feverish eyes were mute evidences of starvation.

"My dear friend," returned Lumley with feeling, "I would put up with a good deal of personal inconvenience to eat this bread, if it were possible. But it isn't. Your cook has made a botch of the baking."

"Try one of those chops," begged the man; "there, beside the bread."

"Chops?" echoed Lumley. "These are not chops; they're clinkers—burned to a cinder. No one could eat those things."

"Have some of the coffee."

Lumley tried it, and strangled.

"I can't," he sputtered. "I'd like to oblige you if I could; but there's a limit to what I can stand, even when I'm ravenous."

"So!" came from the other bitterly. "We are ordered by these usurpers to eat food that even they cannot endure, and they've always been eaters, while we have become absorbers. Our natures are delicately attuned to the beautiful and the progressive in life, and the coarseness of the act of mastication revolts us, even as the odors of the solid food is offensive. Mark my words: Decree 3165 will prove the undoing of these usurpers."

"Where did he come from?" queried another voice.

Lumley looked around. All the male members of the household—four of them—were on their feet. The mother and daughter had lifted themselves on their couches and were staring at Lumley with reproachful eyes.

Lumley explained that he had been set down on the roof by a friend, and was to be picked up later. He was one of the recent arrivals. While on the roof he had heard groans, and out of a desire to relieve a fellow creature's distress he had intruded into the triclinium.

He hoped they would pardon him. He felt for them deeply, and was sorry he was powerless to be of any help. If they would excuse him, he would go back to the roof again and wait for his friend's air-ship.

One of the sons sprang to the wall and pulled a switch. The roof-door could be heard to close.

"I opened that door," said the young man, "so that we could get the air. Now it is closed and fastened."

"Well done!" exclaimed the head of the house. "Send a transmit to the headquarters of the opposition one of

you. We will turn this man over to them."

Then, and for the first time, Lumley realized that his generous desire to aid the distressed had plunged him into trouble. To get to the roof was impossible. The elevator opening was in the wall behind him, and he started up and retreated toward it.

All the time he was executing his retreat toward the elevator he was pleading with his enraged foes for their kindly consideration.

One of the sons was taking down an electric rifle from the wall. Mother and daughter, clasped in each other's arms, were on the verge of hysteria. But the father, tortured into fury by decree 3165, was eager for hostilities.

Just as the young man turned with the electric rifle, Lumley fell backward into the elevator-cage. His falling body touched the spring that released the car, and he shot downward. At the foot of the shaft he regained his feet and plunged through an open door.

He was on the ground floor of the house, and above him he could hear sounds of wildest commotion—transmits shouted to the opposition, screams of women, wild shouts of the men, a patter of feet on broad staircases.

Lumley gained a massive street door, only to find it locked. What was there to do? He fought with the door, and as he struggled he called wildly for help.

His calls, he frantically reasoned, were as useless as his attempts to open the door. Yet he must do something, and instinctively he continued to shout and wrench at the barrier with all his strength.

Suddenly there was a crash, a ringing impact as of a ton of steel hurled against the door on its outer side. The stout wood shivered, and all but yielded. Again came the thunderous attack, and this time the door was burst inward. Lumley was flung backward to the floor. As he lay there he had a glimpse of a warrior muglug charging through the breach.

The steel giant bent over Lumley, lifted him as easily as though he had been an infant, flung him across one shoulder, and made off with him. Outside the house another muglug of the warrior class joined the first, and shoulder to shoulder the two rattled and clanged their way down the street.

The relief Lumley might otherwise have felt was clouded with uncertainty. He was held to the muglug's shoulder by a viselike grip of the iron hands, and every attempt he made to free himself was met with firm resistance.

The two muglugs were at large. Were they dependable, or had they rebelled against the authority of Jerry Dicks and gone on a bit of a rampage? Lumley could only wait and worry and hope for the best.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### TESTED AND FOUND O. K. OR WANTING.

FIVE minutes after Lumley had been rescued from the house where edict 3165 had caused so much distress he was borne into a great building that fairly roared with activity. On every hand steel was smiting steel, and the din was terrific.

Muglugs were at work building other muglugs. The steel mechanics were divided into groups, and each group had its own particular piece-work.

Here were a dozen or so shaping, fitting, and riveting the metal heads; just beyond these were the torso-workers; farther along were the toilers who hinged and jointed the wonderful arms and hands; over on the right were those whose business it was to fashion the legs and feet, and make perfect the clever joints at thigh, knee, and ankle; and then, last of all, were the assembling frames where each part was brought together, and the completed muglug stamped with a number and laid aside for test and final approval.

Lumley, over the iron shoulder of

the muglug who was carrying him, surveyed the establishment with wonder and admiration. He had lost his fears, for the arrival at the factory had convinced him that, although the steel warriors were at large, they were by no means proceeding at random. Reassured as to his own personal safety, he surveyed the plant with interest as he was carried through it.

Passing out of the huge workshop, the two muglugs crossed a glassy plot and entered a small building. Lumley was placed in a chair, and the metal giants who had brought him ranged themselves side by side along the wall and lifted their hands to their foreheads.

A tow-headed usurper of perhaps twenty-five sat at a table in front of a number of blue-prints and received the salute. At the opposite end of the table was a hatchet-faced, thin-shanked man, who stared at Lumley as though at a ghost.

"Hello, Archibald Grant!" exclaimed Lumley.

"Well, what do you think of this?" muttered Grant. "Where the deuce did those muglugs pick you up, Lumley?"

With the words, Grant came over and took Lumley by the hand.

"They saved my life, I think," said Lumley, and explained his recent perils and the timely advent of the two iron warriors.

"Good!" exclaimed Grant, striking his hands together in gratified approval. "Write it down, Haskins, 23," he added, turning to his assistant at the desk; "Nos. 9872 and 9873 tested and found O. K."

"Very well, sir," answered Haskins, and made an entry in a book.

Grant faced the two muglugs.

"Proceed at once to the barracks," he ordered, "and report to Captain Dicks."

Again the metal warriors saluted, then wheeled and tramped away.

"As soon as the muglugs are finished," explained Grant, "we send

them out into the town to see how they behave themselves under the subconscious rays. If they prove tractable, and show the proper amount of initiative, they are passed; if, on the other hand, they are sullen, slow in their movements, and backward in obeying orders, they are repaired and tried again."

"This is most remarkable!" exclaimed Lumley.

"It should not be—to you. It was your book which made such a factory as this possible. We are hustling out the muglugs as fast as we can. You see, the new edict that retires vaporized and deodorized food is a good way from being popular. A storm is going to break before long, and we've got to have the city properly policed."

"I should say the edict wasn't popular! It looks to me like a very unwise proceeding."

"An elegant piece of graft, though," chuckled Archibald Grant. "They've already sold a million cookbooks, and the gold for them is in the treasury. A year of this, Lumley, and every one of the dictators will be a plutocrat."

Regret and sorrow stabbed Lumley to the heart. Graft, graft! Were these dictators thinking of nothing else? Could they heap miseries upon the people for no other purpose than that of lining their treasury?

Lumley felt that he would soon have to take up the cudgels in defense of an oppressed people. For the present, however, there were other matters to claim his attention.

"Have you heard anything about Dr. Kelpie and the time-ball?" he asked; "or about Kinch's pursuit of Jefferson Plunkett?"

"A couple of transmits came in just before you got here," answered Grant. "Dicks stormed the old Kelpie house with a company of muglugs and rescued the doctor, and then the doctor recovered his precious time-ball. Kinch, also, was successful. He overhauled Jefferson Plunkett and laid him



by the heels; then he sailed back to pick you off the roof where you had been left, and has been in a good deal of a funk ever since because he failed to find you. Haskins, 23"—and Grant turned to his assistant—"just go into the transmit-room, will you, and report that Lumley is here at the muglug factory?"

Haskins went into an adjoining chamber to send the transmit. All this good news left but one thing for Lumley to desire.

"Archibald," said he, "could you furnish me with a meal? I have had nothing to eat for more than twenty-four hours, and I'm nearly famished."

"Why, sure, Lumley!" cried Grant. "Haskins, 23, and I have already had our dinner; but it won't take us more than five minutes to get something through the tube for you. Haskins, send in a transmit for roast beef, hashed brown potatoes, bread, butter, apple pie, and coffee. Have the order rushed."

Haskins hurried away again.

"Pink Doolittle is the dictators' chef, Lumley," observed Grant. "You remember Pink? He has a bloomer brigade to help him, and puts up a pretty fair line of eats. He's pulling down a good thing now, and has a cooking school for the old vaporizers and deodorizers—busy every minute at a hundred dollars a minute. How's that, eh? All our earnings go into a common fund, and when we get enough to retire we're going to divide, share and share alike."

"When you divide," asked Lumley, "where'll you retire to?"

A blank look crossed Grant's face.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," he answered indefinitely.

"Will you go back to 1901?"

"Hardly. The taste of unlimited power we have had has changed our whole outlook. These are pretty good times, Lumley, for men with a little 1900 snap and ginger. It's a pity your Rescue Society ever bothered with us. Everything was going swimmingly un-

til Kelpie blew into this era, hitched to his time machine. He was the hostage around which all the opposition rallied. If it hadn't been for him, Lumley, we'd have had no opposition. Of course, when the rest of you fellows came along, the situation was still more complicated. We're getting everything pretty well in hand, though, and there are jobs for several more dictators—we can place all of you late arrivals in good positions."

Lumley shuddered. He would have expressed himself in no uncertain terms had not his dinner arrived at that moment. Without loss of time he began appeasing his hunger.

While he ate, another pair of newly completed muglugs were carried into the office by the steel-workers in steel from the factory. These were laid, grizzily mechanisms of inert metal, upon the floor.

In the head of each was an oil-cup with a screw top. Haskins opened the cups and filled them from a pipe in the wall.

"Open the power-plugs, Haskins," instructed Grant, "and then send a transmit to Head Center for two more rays."

Haskins opened a little door in the back of each muglug's head and tinkered for a moment with the power-plugs. After this he entered the transmit-room and sent in his call to Head Center.

Sitting in his desk-chair, Archibald Grant bent two keenly critical eyes on the prostrate steel giants. One of them lifted its hand as the subconscious ray allotted to it by Head Center "took hold," and the other began to quiver uncannily.

"Get up," ordered Grant.

With a ringing jump each muglug gained its feet, imbued with power from the laboring human mind at Head Center.

"Have you made the record, Haskins?" inquired Grant.

The assistant was writing in his book.

"No. 9874 and No. 9875," he replied.

"You two," proceeded Grant, again addressing the muglugs, "will proceed to the Hudson River and return by way of the Pleasure Gardens to this office. Be gone an hour—no longer. Go!"

He waved his hand authoritatively. One of the muglugs whirled on its iron heel and started out. The other hesitated, an ominous, whirring sound issuing from its hollow interior.

"The sledge, Haskins!" called Grant, rising.

Haskins gripped an iron hammer that hung in a rack on the wall. At the same moment the defective steel giant rushed at Grant like a modern monster upon puny Frankenstein. Grant leaped clear, and Haskins struck a clanging blow on the muglug's head with the hammer.

A vital spot had been touched, and the power-plug disarranged. The steel warrior clumped down on the floor in a disorganized mass, and twitched and struggled feebly. Haskins bounded into the transmit-room, and could be heard signaling Head Center.

"Mug 9875 defective! Withdraw the ray."

Instantly No. 9875 stiffened out, and lay silent and still.

"It happens once in a while," remarked Grant grimly. "Call a couple of workers, Haskins, and send 9875 to the repair-shop."

As two toilers from the work-shop were carrying away the defective muglug, a glittering air-ship hovered suddenly over the grassy sward between the office and the factory, then dropped lightly and swiftly into the factory hangar.

Through the open door of the office Lumley could see a determined-looking man step out of the craft and come down the hangar steps. On either side of him marched a warrior muglug, overlaid with gold and silver filigree-work and armed with an electric rifle.

"Now, what's up?" remarked

Grant, in a puzzled tone. "Here's the chief dictator, and he isn't due to inspect the plant for a week yet. Something's wrong, that's a cinch."

Escorted by his glittering body-guard, Tod Plunkett, the chief dictator, hastened across the strip of lawn and entered the office.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LAST STRAW.

"How are you, Tod?" cried Lumley, rising to greet the chief dictator.

"Lumley, old man," returned Plunkett effusively, "the sight of you is good for sore eyes. Welcome again to the year 2000! Things are vastly different now from what they were on your previous visit. The castaways have got a strangle-hold on the times, old chap, and we're out for reform with a big R. There's a job waiting for you, and as soon as I got the transmit from the muglug factory giving news of your whereabouts, I climbed into the Meteor and flew over this way.

"Say, Lumley, you'll never want to leave. You'll want to cast in your lot with ours and become one of the dictators. All the others who came with you have accepted places of power, and we couldn't think of leaving you out."

"What's that?" asked Lumley, thinking he had not heard aright. "Do you mean to say that Kinch, Mortimer, Ripley, McWilliams, and — and Dr. Kelpie have become dictators?"

"Exactly!" laughed Tod Plunkett. "Kinch is dictator of the secret service, and his fees and perquisites should amount to several millions a year. I've split up the department of foods, raiments, and beverages, and Mortimer goes in as dictator of raiments, while McWilliams rules the beverage bureau. I left Mortimer preparing an edict which makes it a crime to wear bloomers of the period, and declares that on and after thirty days from date clothing of the year 1900 must be secured from the tailors of the raiment department.

How's that for a rake-off? Ripley becomes dictator of dentistry and medicine, and already his department is rushed to death on account of edict 3126. His returns—"

Lumley's brain was dizzy.

"But what is Dr. Kelpie doing?" he interrupted hoarsely.

"He is dictator of microcosmology," replied Plunkett. "It is his business to watch the play of the various elements in our little world, and advise as to what must be done to keep in good health the goose that lays the golden egg. I hope you understand what I mean?" and the chief dictator gave a shrewd wink.

The room was whirling around Lumley, and he gripped the back of a chair to steady himself. He had been counting upon his fellow members of the Rescue Society for aid in persuading the castaways to leave careers of tyranny and graft and go back comfortably to 1901. Now these props had fallen away from him; they had even gone to support that nefarious structure of oppression and tribute so cunningly raised by the usurpers.

Everson Lumley stood alone—alone against all this cruel greed which the twentieth century had unloaded upon the twenty-first. Ah, Dr. Kelpie, Dr. Kelpie, who could have believed it of you! But, stay! Lumley had one thought like a forlorn hope.

"Tod," said he, "what office have you given your brother Jefferson?"

"I haven't seen Jefferson as yet," was the reply; "but I shall certainly have a good dictatorship for Jeff. As for you, Lumley, what more fitting than that you should be supervisor general of the subconscious rays? You can have a blue and gold office in the Head Center Building, and make sure that the rays are at all times efficient and properly directed. There's no chance for graft; but what's the odds? All our pickings are thrown into a common fund, and when we've had enough of the game we'll split even. What do you say?"

Lumley had not the slightest intention of allying himself with the freebooters. He was consecrated to the one purpose of rescuing all of them from their reprehensible careers and restoring them to spheres of respectable activity in their own times. But if he gained his end against such overwhelming odds, he must proceed warily.

"I'll have to think about it, Tod," he said. "I can't give you an answer offhand."

"Better come in with us, Lumley," urged Archibald Grant.

"We'll see about that later," was Lumley's evasive response. "I think, Tod," he went on to the chief dictator, "that decree 3165 was a mistake. It is causing a tremendous amount of distress, and the people will not put up with it. That decree, I should judge from my limited observation, is the last straw."

Tod Plunkett frowned.

"The people will have to put up with it!" he declared. "Our muglug army will force them to carry out the terms of the edict. The will of the dictators is the law of the land. Come along with me, Lumley. We'll go back to headquarters."

The head dictator turned to Grant.

"Hustle the work here, Archibald," said he. "Every capable muglug you turn out is another rivet in the fabric of our power. The stronger we are, the farther we can go; and the farther we go, the more successful our information."

"By working night and day, Tod," replied Grant, "we can turn out, on an average, twenty-five mugs, tested and O.K.'d, every twenty-four hours. Only about one in ten is defective."

"Good work! Keep it up. I'll be around for regular weekly inspection on Saturday next. Good-by. All ready, Lumley."

The two products *de luxe* of the muglug factory, especially constructed for the chief dictator's body-guard, marched back to the gleaming air-ship as they had marched away from it—

flanking their august master. Lumley stepped along behind.

They boarded the Meteor. A small, compactly built muglug—the first Lumley had seen outside the warrior class—was the Meteor's pilot.

"Head Center Building," ordered Plunkett.

The air-ship arose straight into the air for five hundred feet and then darted toward the north.

On all the roof-tops over which they passed there was an ominous lack of life, and not only there, but everywhere else, a still more ominous silence. Vine-clad pergolas and flowery roof-gardens were untenanted; streets, and even the pleasure gardens, were deserted! and only here and there could an occasional man of the period be seen.

"It's like a dead city," murmured the awed Lumley.

"Tut, tut!" reproved Plunkett. "I don't like such gruesome terms. It's only the calm that proceeds the real awakening of the people, Lumley. The public of this era have vaporized itself into a weak-kneed apology of what a hearty, progressive public ought to be. These people invented the muglug, and gradually retired from active service and allowed muglugs to do everything that looked like work. Lack of exercise brought on dyspepsia; dyspepsia made it necessary to absorb food, instead of eating it; vaporized nutrition caused the people to run down physically; and when a nation is physically weak it becomes the prey of the strong. We castaways saw our chance, and laid hold of it. It is our laudable purpose to change every deplorable habit and bring the people of the period back to a strong and efficient commonwealth."

*(To be continued.)*

"What will happen to you if you succeed?" asked Lumley. "Have you ever thought of that, Plunkett?"

"Why, yes. When we make a clean-up here, Lumley, we shall go on to Chicago, and put through a similar reform there; and from Chicago we'll go to some other big city of the country. All the big towns are crying for reform, and we dictators are ready to give them what they need—for a consideration."

Tod Plunkett rounded out his remarks with a greedy laugh which Lumley did not like.

By that time the Meteor had carried them well up into the ancient Bronx district, and a building with a tall dome, and set by itself in a large square, came under their eyes.

"There's the Head Center Building," announced the chief dictator, looking lazily over the Meteor's side. "Well, well!" he muttered, as his eyes swept the scene below. His languid air vanished. "There are plenty of people down there. By George, all the citizens we missed farther south seem to have flocked to Head Center Plaza!"

"They're fighting!" cried Lumley excitedly. "I told you edict 3165 was the last straw! The citizens have rebelled, Plunkett!"

"Let 'em rebel," scowled the chief dictator. "I expected it would cost us a good deal of trouble to make real men out of them; but it's a good work, and we're able to pay the price."

Lumley, filled with conflicting emotions, stared down at the heaving masses of humanity below. As the Meteor drew closer and closer to the plaza, the whole wild scene was brought into clearer and more thrilling detail.

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### GRIEF'S PRELUDE.

I CAN forgive you in this hour we part;

Yea, I can smile and stay the rising tears;

But oh, I dread that loneliness of heart,

Not now, not now—but through the long, bleak years!

*Charles Hanson Towne.*

# On the Plymouth Express



by  
**Frank Conly**

**W**HEW! A hundred thousand this? Rothwell, the Chicago millionaire, traveling down to Torquay from London with Mrs. Rothwell, makes up with a gentlemanly stranger—invites him to their reserved compartment for a talk—stranger holds 'em up at the point of a revolver, collars the lady's jewel-case containing the famous pearl necklace and other jewelry worth half a million dollars, and jumps the train. And this is England—well!"

Colonel Tomlinson, an American of distinguished appearance, hadn't been half an hour in the smoking-lounge of the Wellington Hotel at Plymouth, but already he had made himself agreeable to a group of the hotel guests, and indeed had more or less occupied the attention of the entire room. He was talkative and typically American.

Extra editions of the evening papers had just been brought in, and there had been a pause in the conversation in consequence. An extra edition is not an every-day occurrence in Plymouth, and every one was curious to see the news that had justified this one.

Colonel Tomlinson's exclamation started a discussion of the affair.

"Must put you in mind of home," suggested an alert individual in a characteristic English drawl.

The colonel laughed easily.

"Why, now, that's knocking us sort of hard; but the remark isn't altogether unjustified. We certainly do have some daring hold-ups over on the other side; but not often a one-man job like this. You see, we haven't the apartment-cars in America. The cars are open all the way through, and it takes a gang to do a job like this; they've got to hold up the entire train, you see."

While Tomlinson was talking a plump little man of ruddy complexion entered the smoking-room. Just inside the door he paused uncertainly and eyed the back of the speaker, which was toward him. Then, unobtrusively, he walked toward the group, edging around so as to obtain a view of the man's face. From this position he regarded the speaker fixedly.

The colonel caught his eye and addressed him directly:

"We're just discussing the Rothwell hold-up. Have you seen the news?"

Mrs. Rothwell's half-million-dollar jewels stolen—"

The plump man's face was working violently. Tomlinson paused in alarm.

"What's the matter, sir? Are you ill?" he asked solicitously.

Then the plump man exploded.

"You're talking about Rothwell, of Chicago—well, that's me."

There was a gasp from the bystanders. Rothwell half turned toward them.

"You've heard I've been robbed? Then," dramatically pointing a fat finger at Colonel Tomlinson, "that's the man who turned the trick. Hold 'im till I fetch the police."

"Why, what nonsense!"

"Impossible!"

"Come, now, how absurd!"

Mingled consternation and incredulity greeted the charge. Colonel Tomlinson, however, remained cool.

"Our friend is a practical joker," he remarked, with a good-natured smile.

"That's the man, I tell you," roared Rothwell, going purple in the face with excess of anger. "The crook has shaved off his mustache and parted his hair on the other side; but I tell you it's he. Collar him, boys; don't let him escape. You—you—" He shook his fist impotently in the face of the man he accused.

"Really, friend, your joke has gone far enough, don't you think?" said Tomlinson quietly, a steely glitter coming into his eyes.

## II.

I HAPPENED to be in Plymouth awaiting the arrival of the New York boat. We had got information at Scotland Yard that two men, who were badly wanted by the Manhattan police, were on board, and I had a couple of plain-clothes men with me, besides two of the local police, as a committee of welcome.

At an urgent request from Hopkins, chief of the Plymouth force, I left my

subordinates on the pier to meet the tender from the steamer, and joined that official in the manager's room at the Wellington. I soon had an outline of the affair that had just taken place there.

Rothwell was as mad as a hatter at first, and insisted that Tomlinson should be arrested; but the manager had quietly telephoned Hopkins, and between them they had persuaded him at last to permit them to make a few inquiries first. The colonel, on his part, readily consented to undergo a private examination, or, indeed, to do anything that might be required of him. I couldn't but admire his patient reasonableness.

I listened to Rothwell's story with deep interest. The man he had taken up with in the dining saloon of the London - to - Plymouth Express, had called himself Badstock, and was, to all appearances, an aristocratic Englishman. But Rothwell assured me he was quite certain that Colonel Tomlinson was the same man.

He and Mrs. Rothwell had found Badstock an exceptionally agreeable companion, and on their new acquaintance offering to introduce them to some of the best London society on their return trip to the metropolis from Torquay, they invited him to their reserved compartment to continue their chat.

Darkness had fallen. Basingstoke had been left far behind, and talk was beginning to lag. Salisbury was passed, and the lights of that town were well in the rear when Badstock rose.

The rhythm of the running wheels had reduced the Chicago millionaire and Mrs. Rothwell to a comfortable lassitude. Before they were more than dimly aware of what was happening, Badstock had raised his hand and severed the emergency connection. Then they found themselves covered with a revolver, and a tense voice commanded them to be quiet, at the peril of their lives.

Before they had recovered from the

shock, the robber had seized the jewel-case lying on the seat by the lady's side, and swung open the door. For a moment he hung almost horizontal, with his feet forward toward the locomotive; then he dropped off.

Mrs. Rothwell fainted. Rothwell himself recovered his presence of mind, rang for the attendant, and, bursting into the next compartment, violently jerked the emergency cord. That stopped the train; but some three miles from the place where Badstock had skilfully dropped off.

Of course there was great excitement and a lot of time lost; but at the next signal-box word was flashed by telegraph and telephone all along the line, and the train resumed its journey.

Colonel Tomlinson listened to this narrative with concentrated attention.

"Amazing!" was his comment.

The fat little millionaire glared at us though he'd like to eat him.

"If you don't mind, Colonel Tomlinson," I said, "perhaps you will tell us your story."

"Why—yes," he immediately responded. "I've been touring Europe, and, finding Chester a delightful little city, I decided to stay there a week.

"As I wanted to see some of the country around here, and had already seen London, the people advised me to take the West of England route. It's slower, but the scenery makes it more than worth while. What more is there to say? The hotel people know that I came in by the West of England route; the train must have arrived nearly half an hour before the London train by which Mr. Rothwell traveled."

"Gee!" ejaculated the millionaire. "Say, if that's so, I'm plumb sorry; but—"

Words failed him.

"I think that ends the whole matter, Ferguson," said Hopkins with decision; and I agreed.

Colonel Tomlinson, however, was not satisfied.

"This has been rather an unpleasant experience, Mr. Ferguson," he said, ad-

ressing himself to me as representing headquarters. "I'm mighty glad that the circumstances clear me so easily. All the same, I want to clear things up thoroughly. The manager, on my behalf, has telegraphed the Royal Hotel at Chester, and has sent for the conductor of the train I came in on. If you have no objection, we'll wait for corroborative evidence from these sources."

"That is quite unnecessary," I hastened to assure him; "but if it will add to your peace of mind, we are all quite agreeable."

The manager ordered in some refreshments, and we were all chatting together like old friends, when the guard—or conductor, as Tomlinson called him—was brought in.

He readily identified the colonel.

"Yes, sir," he said, in answer to my questions. "I knows the gen'l'man orl-right. I took partic'lar stock of 'im. He'd a lot of luggage an' was pretty liberal. He gave me a half-sovereign at Manchester, an' told me to take care of his traps—of course, I'd 'ave done my dooty, anyway. An' then he gave me another half-sovereign when we got in. Oh, I knows 'm orl-right."

The evidence was conclusive, and when the telegram came from the Royal Hotel at Chester it clenched things. It described Colonel Tomlinson pretty accurately—hotel managers are used to that sort of thing, you know—and the description fitted the man before us exactly. The alibi was complete.

Rothwell apologized with elaborate profuseness. I assured him that everything possible would be done to recover his wife's jewels, and, professing himself entirely satisfied, he went off to join that lady, who was still suffering from the shock of the unpleasant experience she had undergone.

### III.

THE first inkling I had that the Chicago pork-packer was not entirely con-

vinced of his error, was when I entered the railway station next day to return to London. My detectives had nabbed their men all right, and we had handed them over to the local authorities to await the extradition hearings. Our work was done.

As I was crossing the platform to take the London train, whom should I run into but Norman Harley.

"Hello, Harley!" I exclaimed, in surprise; "what on earth are you doing down here?"

"Ferguson, by Jove!" he replied, heartily shaking hands. "Glad to see you. Somebody by the name of Rothwell sent for me. He's lost jewels worth a hundred thousand pounds—or his wife has. Rather a remarkable case; but, of course, you must have heard of it."

"Better go back home, Harley," I said, rather sourly, I'll admit, for Rothwell's sending for a private detective annoyed me.

We don't favor private detectives so much in England as you do in America; though Harley was an exception, too. He was an amateur who never accepted a fee. Crime detection was his hobby.

He often helped us at the yard, as I mentioned in a previous reminiscence, and never claimed credit for his work. That came to us officials. It wasn't Harley I was annoyed at; but at the Chicago millionaire.

I watched my train steam out while I went over the case in detail. I decided I could very well take the next train, and perhaps I should have the pleasure of carrying Harley along with me. But he insisted upon seeing Rothwell first.

I wasn't present at that interview. After it, and when he had talked with Hopkins and the hotel manager, he was inclined to admit that we were right and the millionaire pork-packer wrong. Only Harley was always chary of committing himself.

In the afternoon he went out walking with the Rothwells, who had de-

cided to postpone their visit to Torquay indefinitely. He came back from that walk all excitement.

"Ferguson," he began at once, "trust a woman to note insignificant details. I've got an important clue from Mrs. Rothwell. Just take a run up to Chester and make a few inquiries about Colonel Tomlinson. Take your time over it, and—let me see, this is Tuesday—on Friday, persuade a couple of the friends he met at the Royal to come down here. You await my telegram."

"You go to thunder, Harley!" said I promptly. "I'm not going away up there on any wild-goose chase. Women notice details—fiddlesticks! They'll see details that don't exist."

"Well, please yourself, Ferguson. You've ten minutes to catch your train, if you're going. Rothwell's offering one thousand pounds reward for the recovery of his wife's jewels."

Well, I knew Harley of old. He was generally to be depended on, and—there was the reward.

I went to Chester and made inquiries. As I had expected, everything I heard fitted in exactly with Tomlinson's story. I chafed under the irksome situation, and secretly cursed Harley for a blunderer.

Then I had this telegram from him:

Arrest Colonel Tomlinson at Liverpool. Probably sailing Saturday by Mauretania. Disguised, particularly as to voice. Assumed name.

I got my man all right. He was dressed in a suit of rough tweed, with cap to match, and had booked a second-class passage. He spoke like a well-bred Englishman, and protested violently, denying his identity, and that he had ever seen me before; but I took a chance.

When I joined Harley in London, I got a surprise. He had another Tomlinson under arrest. The two were as like as two peas, and when I had recovered from the shock I got the full story as Harley had unraveled it.



"I've often told you, Ferguson," he said, "that a mystery is the best thing that can happen in a big case. It's in the mystery that the clue lies. You know from your own experiences that it is the apparently simple cases that so often prove most baffling—the cases where there is no element of mystery."

"Go on; I know," I said impatiently.

"Well, it struck me at once that Rothwell must be pretty sure of his man to remain so stubborn in his identification, even after he had, for policy's sake, pretended to be convinced he was wrong. I must say I admire that fat little millionaire's shrewdness. He'd have made a fine detective."

"If he was right," I argued.

"Then came that walk with the Rothwells. We met Tomlinson—or Badstock—which is which, and what their real names are, we'll find out in due course. It was the first time Mrs. Rothwell had seen him since he dropped off the train about ten miles from Salisbury.

"Immediately we passed him, she clutched my arm and whispered excitedly: 'That's the man.' She had heard all about Colonel Tomlinson, and I laughingly assured her she was mistaken, but she persisted. 'I know it is the man,' she said; 'he has a mole on the left side of his neck, just under the angle of the jaw.'

"I had noted that mole, Ferguson, and you know what I said about women observing details. Mrs. Rothwell's remark convinced me there was a mystery, and that gave me my clue. The rest was fairly easy.

"To begin with, we have an educated crook dropping from a train. That man knew what he was doing, too, for the way he jumped with feet out, horizontal toward the engine, there was little danger; taking into consideration the nature of the ground. Thick grass up to the top of the grading, and clumps of yielding bushes all the way along, to stop him from rolling to the bottom. But he wouldn't have chosen that spot if he hadn't some means of getting

away. The telegraph would soon be working, and he would certainly be caught in a closely populated country like England.

"Well, taking into consideration that he got to Plymouth on the express from Exeter—something over seventy miles away—there was only one explanation."

"Oh, what was that?" I interrupted in wonderment.

"An aeroplane—and he must have made it zip, for he had to make seven minutes' better time than the London express schedule to catch the West of England train at Exeter, and enough over to house the plane and get to the station. The distance would be about seventy miles, as the crow flies.

"I soon found out that a man answering his description had brought an aeroplane to Salisbury for the meet there; but—he didn't enter it for any of the contests.

"Not far from the point where Badstock left the train I found a farmer who had lent the use of his barn to house an aeroplane which, according to the aviator's story, had been giving engine trouble. That was two days before the robbery.

"The evening of the day after he arrived, the flying man left on his machine again. But that was only a bluff. The barn in question being in a field, five hundred yards from the house, and not in use at the time, it was easy to return later in the night and put his machine under shelter again. The little son of the house had slipped down to the barn the following day and saw the machine. He had been ordered not to go near the barn, so said nothing at home, till I questioned him."

After listening to Harley's recital, I saw that the case was fairly clear.

"And the man who established the alibi at Chester got off at Exeter, I suppose?" I said.

"Yes, got off dressed in the tweed suit and cap you found him in. He was a bit of a fool, for he claimed the aeroplane two days later, from the liv-

ery man on the outskirts of the city. By that time I had seen the machine. In a locker under the seat I found a safety-razor with the hair of Badstock's mustache still on it, and part of the clothing he had worn when he left London.

"The two men you sent from Chester—men who had been friends of Tomlinson at the Royal Hotel there—I took in and introduced to him. He was perfectly unconscious of ever having met them before. At first they were sure of their identification, but when they heard the man talk they assured me he was not the Colonel Tomlinson they had known.

"I had our man arrested as he was stepping on to the steamer gangway at Plymouth."

"Why didn't he make his escape at once, after he had cleared himself?" I put the question up to Norman Harley.

"Why, man! Don't you see the cleverness of his scheme? He probably guessed, or knew from his own lips, that Rothwell would put up at the Wellington. Well, he might have gone in any direction he chose, with his aeroplane. He was careful to plan the whole affair so as to stand the test of an informal inquiry right away. Afterward, he considered himself immune from arrest.

"All the same, if he had sailed right away, suspicion *might* have been aroused, and it would have been easy to get him through the use of the cable and wireless services.

"Oh, the man's plan was a bold one all right; and he had the nerve to carry it out, too."

Harley's story made me do some thinking.

"That was a clever dodge, tipping the guard twice to insure his identification," I muttered.

# The Motor-Bus Mystery



By Bertram Lebhar

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THEIR FELLOW PASSENGER.

**E**DWARDS stood at the rail of the promenade-deck, watching the waves, when he was addressed by a man at his side:

"Fine weather, isn't it?"

Edwards agreed cordially, then took a sidelong glance at the man who had spoken.

He appeared to be about thirty-five, was evidently an American, and would have been handsome if it had not been for a certain sinister expression which rendered his face unprepossessing despite the regularity of the features.

Edwards, who prided himself upon his ability to size up a man's character from his physiognomy, decided that this man was crafty and cruel and not at all a companion to his taste.

Apparently unaware of the unfavorable impression he had made, the other went on: "If we have such weather as this for the rest of the trip we won't have any cause to kick, eh?"

"No, I suppose we won't" replied Edwards, shortly.

"Good sailor?" The fellow seemed determined to maintain a conversation.

"Yes, pretty good."

"Been across the ocean before, then?"

"Oh yes, several times."

"American citizen I presume?"

Edwards nodded.

"So am I," replied the stranger, "but have been living abroad for some time. This will be the first I have visited the United States in six years. Feel like the prodigal son returning home."

"Hope you'll find the fatted calf killed, cooked and ready to serve," remarked Edwards, thinking that he might as well be pleasant as long as the fellow was determined to talk.

The other man laughed hilariously.

"Oh, the fatted calf will be awaiting me all right. The original prodigal of biblical fame didn't fare nearly as well as I'm going to. I've got something better than a square meal to look forward to. I'm going to the United States to inherit a big fortune."

"A fortune, eh?" repeated Edwards, with a smile. "That's good."

He believed that he was on to the fellow's purpose now. Some sort of bunco game was about to be worked on him. He was amused to think that of all the persons on board ship he could have been selected as a possible victim.

"I didn't have the slightest idea that I looked so easy," he said to himself. "I wonder just what there is about my face which makes this fellow consider me good material."

He decided that he would lead the man on. It would be good fun to let the swindler think that he was swallowing the baited hook. If the game was a long-drawn-out one it might furnish

him with amusement for the rest of the voyage. Edwards felt sadly in need of a little amusement to drive away the melancholy which oppressed him whenever he thought of the impending fate of his unfortunate client, Davenport Sudbury.

"How big is this, may I ask?" he inquired with well-simulated interest.

"Pretty near a hundred thousand dollars. Nice little sum, eh?"

"I should say so. Did I understand you to say that it was an inheritance?"

"Yes, from my maternal grandfather. The poor old boy was murdered a few months ago, and they've just found a will which makes me his chief beneficiary."

"So your grandfather was murdered, eh?" remarked Edwards, inwardly wondering just what form of swindle he was up against. He was familiar with the details of most of the bunco games worked on unsuspecting ocean voyagers, but this seemed to be a brand-new one.

"Yes," continued the other. "The poor old fellow was murdered on top of an omnibus—stabbed in the back by a rascally conductor— Why, what's the matter with you?"

His exclamation was occasioned by the expression of astonishment which had come to Edward's face in spite of the lawyer's effort to maintain his self-control.

"Was your grandfather's name Reynolds — Colonel Joseph Reynolds?"

"Yes—did you know him?" It was the other's turn to appear astonished.

"I was acquainted with him slightly. He and I lived in the same town."

"Oh, I see," replied Colonel Reynolds's grandson. "And how is the old place? It is eight years since I was last there. I suppose there have been many changes."

"Yes," replied Edwards. "The city has grown considerably within the past few years. You will scarcely recognize it."

"I presume I won't. I am glad I ran into somebody who comes from my birthplace—I shall expect you to give me a lot of interesting information about it during the voyage. By the way, won't you tell me your name? Mine is Chester Selling."

"And mine Franklin Edwards."

An expression of uneasiness flitted across Selling's face.

"Franklin Edwards," he exclaimed. "That name sounds exceedingly familiar. Where on earth have I heard it before? Oh, yes; I know. I remember seeing it in the newspapers from home. Aren't you the lawyer who defended that rascally omnibus conductor who murdered my grandfather?"

Edwards nodded gloomily.

"Yes, I was the counsel for that unfortunate young man. Let me assure you, however, that he is not a rascal and that he did not murder Colonel Reynolds."

"But he has been found guilty by twelve good men and true," protested the other.

"It was a terrible miscarriage of justice," declared Edwards, "as I hope to be able to prove before the day set for his execution arrives."

"Then you believe his story about that mysterious young woman who was a passenger on top of the omnibus that fatal night? You think that it was she who committed the crime, eh?" inquired Selling eagerly.

"No," replied the lawyer. "I have reason to believe now that that young woman is as innocent as my client." He could not help sighing as he uttered these words.

"But one of the two must be guilty," protested the other, almost fretfully. "If the conductor didn't murder my grandfather, it must have been the young woman, and if the young woman is innocent, it must have been the conductor. There was nobody else on top of that omnibus, and, consequently, nobody but one of those two could have had the opportunity to stab my poor

grandfather in the back as he sat there."

Edwards shrugged his shoulders.

"I must admit that there seems to be very little logic in my position; but, nevertheless, I am quite sure that the colonel was murdered by somebody else."

"But how could that be?" demanded Selling. "Do you suppose that the murderer swooped down on his victim in an airship?"

He accompanied the question with a harsh, sneering laugh which grated on his listener.

"I am not able to advance any theory as to how it could have been done, at present," replied the latter quietly, "but I am going to do my utmost to unearth the real murderer and save my unfortunate client."

"Well, I wish you success I'm sure," said the other with a repetition of that disagreeable, jeering laugh which made Edwards feel like assaulting him.

The lawyer, averse to continuing the conversation, turned on his heel and walked to the other end of the deck, where he encountered Jack Meador, Mrs. Meador and Miss Sudbury.

"I've got some interesting news for you folks," remarked Edwards. "Do you see that fellow over there? Well, I have just learned from him that he is the grandson of the late Colonel Reynolds and that he is sailing to the United States to inherit his grandfather's big fortune. Rather queer he should be on the same ship as ourselves, eh?"

His three companions glanced curiously at the man in question and suddenly Mrs. Meador turned pale as she uttered a half-stifling cry of surprise and alarm.

"What's the matter, dear?" inquired her husband.

"Why, that man," she gasped, "is the one I told you about—the brute from my home town who knows my secret and has made my life miserable by threatening to betray it if I would not marry him."

"So that's the blackmailing scoundrel, is it?" growled Meador. "I've been yearning to meet him. I've a good mind to go over right now and give him the thrashing he richly deserves."

"Stop," exclaimed Edwards. "Don't be rash, Jack. Mrs. Meador must be making a mistake. That cannot possibly be the fellow she saw on Bayside Drive the night of the murder."

"It is," the young woman declared. "I am positive it is. I know Chester Selling too well to be mistaken."

"Chester Selling," repeated Edwards, greatly astonished. "That is his name all right—or at least that is what he told me his name was. There's something very queer about this. That man distinctly told me that he has not been in the United States within the past six years, and yet you insist that it was the sight of him pursuing that Bayside Drive omnibus which caused you to leave the bus so hastily the night of the murder."

"Yes," declared Mrs. Meador. "I am absolutely positive that he was there. He is telling a lie when he says that he has not been in America within the past six years."

"I wonder what could be his object?" muttered Edwards thoughtfully.

"Did I understand you to say that he is Colonel Reynolds's grandson, and that he is going back to the United States to inherit the old man's money?" inquired Meador.

"Yes, that's what he told me."

"Well, you can depend upon it that that is the answer to the problem," declared Meador excitedly. "There's some crooked work going on, Frank, and we've got to get to the bottom of it."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AN INSPIRATION.

"THE very first minute I set eyes on the fellow I mistrusted him," declared Edwards. "There was some-

thing about him which repelled me. I feel sure he's a swindler."

"I think he's more than a swindler," added Meador, dropping his voice to an impressive whisper. "I believe he's a murderer."

"A murderer!" gasped his wife and Mildred Sudbury in chorus.

"Yes. It wouldn't surprise me at all to find that that fellow is the real assassin of old Colonel Reynolds. I suppose you think I'm crazy, Frank, to advance such an idea; but—"

"Not at all," interrupted Edwards. "As a matter of fact the same thought was beginning to take shape in my own mind. That would account, of course, for his pretending that he is returning to the United States for the first time in six years. His purpose in telling that lie may be to divert suspicion from himself by an alibi."

"Sure," assented Meador. "And if he is telling the truth about being the heir to the colonel's estate, he had a big enough motive for killing the poor old man. No doubt he knew that he was named in the will, and he put the old man out of the way in order to come into his inheritance quickly. There have been lots of murders committed by impecunious heirs who could not wait for their benefactors to die a natural death."

"Probably he sneaked home expressly to kill the poor old man, and then returned to Europe immediately after committing the crime and waited there until he was notified by his grandfather's attorneys," suggested Edwards.

"But how could he have committed that murder," argued Mrs. Meador, "when he wasn't on that omnibus? We have the conductor's word for it that that unfortunate old gentleman and myself were the only passengers who rode on top of his bus that night."

"He may have climbed to the top without the conductor seeing him," suggested Meador.

"No," declared Edwards, "that isn't possible. My client is absolutely

positive that no other person rode on top of the bus that night. I have discussed the matter with him over and over again and he sticks resolutely to that statement."

"Well, that certainly is a poser," admitted Meador. "I can't see how anybody could have stabbed the old man in the back without being on the bus. If the colonel had been shot instead of stabbed, we might assume that the crime was committed at long range—but that theory won't do, of course, in the present case."

"Couldn't the assassin have been on top of another bus?" suggested his wife. "Wouldn't it have been possible for him to lean over and plunge his knife into his victim as the two vehicles were passing each other?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Meador, looking at her admiringly. "That's a clever idea. Sounds plausible, too; doesn't it, Frank?"

Edwards shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry to say that it won't do. It is clever of Mrs. Meador to have thought of it; but it isn't the solution to the problem.

"I investigated that theory thoroughly—it occurred to me early in the case—and I found that the position in which the body was discovered and the nature of the wound proved conclusively that the murder could not have been committed by a person on a passing vehicle. The man who plunged the knife between the colonel's shoulder-blades must have been standing directly behind his victim when he did it."

"Maybe he swooped down on his victim in an air-ship," suggested Meador, with a grim laugh.

"That's exactly what that fellow Selling said when I was discussing the case with him a few minutes ago," remarked Edwards.

"Were you discussing the murder with him?" inquired the other lawyer with an inflection of surprise.

"Yes. When he informed me that he was the grandson of the late Colonel Reynolds, we naturally fell to talk-

ing about the poor old gentleman's sad fate."

"And what was his behavior during the conversation?" inquired Meador eagerly. "Did his words or actions indicate that he might be guilty?"

"Well, he was cool enough, I must admit; but when I told him that my client was innocent, and that I was determined to unearth the real murderer, he replied with a sneering laugh that was almost a challenge. There was something about that laugh of his which makes me suspect that he either committed the crime himself, or knows who did it and how it was done."

Mildred Sudbury now inquired abruptly: "Can anybody tell me if there is an arch of any sort along the route of those Bayside Drive omnibuses?"

"An arch!" repeated Meador and Edwards together.

"Yes," said the girl. "It had just occurred to me that that might be the solution of the mystery. I recollect that there is a street in London with a railroad arch across it under which omnibuses pass.

"Now, if there is an arch of that sort in your town, it might be the explanation of how that murder was committed. The assassin standing on a bridge may have stabbed Colonel Reynolds as the bus passed underneath."

The two lawyers exchanged a glance of amazement mingled with jubilation.

"The elevated railroad structure at Carboy Street!" gasped Meador.

"Yes, the Bayside Drive omnibuses pass underneath it!" exclaimed Edwards breathlessly.

"And it's so low that a man standing on it could easily have reached over and plunged a knife into Colonel Reynolds's back without getting into the omnibus at all!" cried Meador joyously. "That's the right answer sure enough, Frank."

"What a blithering idiot I've been never to have thought of that myself," exclaimed Edwards disgustedly, and he impulsively seized his stenographer's hand.

"Miss Sudbury, I congratulate you upon your smartness. Your inspiration has probably saved your brother's life."

"I hope so," she replied wistfully. "But, of course, it's only a theory, and it may not be the right one after all."

"I'm satisfied that it is," declared Edwards stoutly. "Look here!"

He drew from his pocket the hunting-knife, with which there was every reason to believe the crime had been committed.

"This knife was picked up at the corner of Bayside Drive and Carboy Street. Don't you remember the man who found it telling me that, Miss Sudbury? That's pretty good proof that your theory is the right one. No doubt the assassin dropped his weapon after committing the crime and didn't have nerve enough to go down and recover it."

"Do you mean to say that you knew all along that that dagger was found at Bayside Drive and Carboy Street, and yet the idea that the crime might have been committed from the elevated structure never entered your mind, Frank?" demanded Meador scornfully.

Edwards nodded his head shamefacedly.

"I can't understand how I overlooked such an obvious deduction," he said, "but I must confess that I did."

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed his friend disgustedly.

As Edwards was replacing the knife in his pocket Meador remarked: "Be sure to take good care of that weapon, Frank. It will doubtless prove a valuable piece of evidence later on when the murderer is brought to trial."

"Yes," responded Edwards, "it ought to prove useful then; but it is also going to prove of great value to us right now, I think. I've got an idea. I believe that by means of this weapon we shall be able to learn, before another day has passed, whether or not that fellow Selling is guilty of the murder of Colonel Reynolds."

He outlined his plan, over which the others were enthusiastic.

"We'll put it into operation right away," declared Meador. "It's a bully idea, Frank. If the scoundrel is guilty he is bound to fall into the trap."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE TRAP.

CHESTER SELLING, in a steamer-chair, was reading a magazine when an approaching footstep caused him to look up listlessly.

It was Franklin Edwards who was pacing up and down the deck, passing and repassing the spot where Selling was seated.

The lawyer appeared to be worried. His hands were clasped behind his back and his head was bent.

A smile came to Selling's face as he watched him—a smile in which defiance, contempt, and satisfaction were blended.

Suddenly, as Edwards passed Selling's steamer-chair for the sixth time, something dropped from the lawyer's pocket.

It hit the deck with a metallic thud which ought to have called Edwards's attention to his loss; but the latter appeared to be so engrossed in his thoughts that he did not hear the sound of the impact, for he kept walking right on.

Even when Selling called out to him: "Hey, there! You've dropped something!" he did not turn his head nor give any indication that he had heard.

Selling got up and moved toward the article lying in front of his chair, with the intention of handing it to its careless owner.

It was a knife, and as Selling's fingers closed around it his face suddenly turned pale, his eyes opened wide with astonishment, and he did not carry out his original intention of handing the article back to the man who had dropped it.

Instead, he made one quick step

toward the guard-rail, lifted his arm, and hurled the knife with all his might into the sea.

He heaved a sigh of relief as it struck the water and disappeared, and, returning to his chair, hurriedly opened his magazine and appeared to be deeply interested in his reading when Edwards passed by again.

The lawyer had evidently discovered his loss now, for he was searching every inch of the deck anxiously.

"Hello there!" exclaimed Selling, suddenly looking up and pretending to notice the other's presence for the first time. "Looking for anything?"

"Yes. I've lost a knife. I've just discovered that I have a big hole in my coat pocket. It must have dropped around here somewhere, for I am sure that it was in my pocket all right a few minutes ago. Don't happen to have seen anybody pick it up, do you?"

"No. I've been so interested in this story that I wasn't noticing anything that went on around me. Maybe it rolled off the ship and into the water. These decks are awfully smooth, you know."

"Yes, probably it did—confound the luck. That knife was of great importance to me. It was evidence in a case I'm working on. It can't be helped, however. Serves me right for being so careless as to have holes in my pocket."

He passed on, and as soon as his back was turned Selling permitted his features to expand into a smile of satisfaction.

Upon the countenance of Franklin Edwards, too, there was a broad smile of triumph.

"It worked like a charm," he said to himself as he went below, where he joined the Meadors and Mildred Sudbury, who were awaiting his arrival anxiously.

"He's guilty!" he exclaimed in response to their eager glances. "There isn't the slightest doubt in my mind now that Chester Selling is the murderer of Colonel Reynolds. He walked blindly into our trap."

"What did he do?" inquired Jack Meador with breathless interest.

"Picked up the knife the moment I dropped it and hurled it into the ocean."

"What!" cried Meador. "Do you mean to say we've lost the knife? That's a bad piece of business, Frank. We needed it for evidence later on."

"Yes. I didn't figure on his throwing it overboard. I thought he was too cautious to run the risk of being seen doing that. I supposed he'd pick up the knife and put it in his pocket, in which case we could have devised some means of getting it away from him later on."

"It shows how badly scared the scoundrel was, that he didn't lose a moment in getting rid of the incriminating piece of evidence against him."

"Yes," agreed Meador. "His conduct is positive proof of his guilt. If he didn't commit that murder he would not have recognized the knife as the weapon with which the deed was done, and, consequently, could have had no reason for hurling it into the ocean. Your experiment has proved a complete success, Frank, except that we've lost the knife."

"Never mind," replied Edwards cheerfully. "We can get along without it. The main thing was to satisfy ourselves that our man is guilty, and we've accomplished that, so I'm well satisfied."

"And what will you do, now, Mr. Edwards?" inquired Mildred Sudbury eagerly. "Will you instruct the captain to have the wretch put in irons and send a wireless to the United States, ordering the authorities to release my poor brother from that horrid prison immediately?"

"Well, not exactly," replied Edwards with a deprecating smile. "I'm afraid we can't move quite as quickly as that, Miss Sudbury. There's quite a difference, you see, between knowing that the fellow is guilty and being able to prove him so. Unfortunately we haven't any proof at present; or, at least, not enough proof to warrant our demanding his arrest."



"I don't see why not," she retorted. "We can show that he was seen on Bayside Drive running after that omnibus the night of the murder, and, consequently, that he is lying when he says that he was in Europe at that time; we can show that he was so agitated by the sight of the weapon with which the murder was committed that he threw the knife overboard, and we can point to the fact that he has a villainous face, and looks just like a person who would commit a horrible crime of that sort. Surely that is enough proof to satisfy anybody."

"Hardly," commented Edwards, with another smile. "Those points will help a whole lot later on, of course, Miss Sudbury, when we have discovered other evidence; but by themselves they do not constitute legal proof that he is the assassin of Colonel Reynolds. We must wait until we are able to back up our accusation with hard facts, enough to convince the authorities of his guilt."

"But how are we going to get those facts?" she demanded impatiently. "We have got to act quickly. By the time you have built up what you consider a complete case against that fellow it will be too late. My poor brother will already have been put to death."

"We must endeavor to get a stay of execution," said Edwards. "As soon as we reach the other side I shall take the necessary steps to obtain a reprieve. I think that I can confidently promise you that I shall be able to accomplish that much, Miss Sudbury. While we haven't as yet got enough of a case against Selling to justify the authorities in arresting him, I believe that we have at least enough of an argument to persuade any judge to put off your brother's execution for a few weeks, so as to give us a chance to get the evidence we need."

"And we're going to get it, too," broke in Meador confidently. "Don't you worry, Miss Sudbury. Frank and I are going to work like a couple of

bloodhounds to prove that scoundrel's guilt. By the time we get through there won't be a doubt in anybody's mind that he committed the crime of which your brother is accused."

"Couldn't you scare him into confessing?" suggested Mrs. Meador. "I know that Chester Selling is a coward. It ought not to be a difficult task to break down his nerve."

"By Jove!" exclaimed her husband, "That's not a bad suggestion. We might try a little third-degree work right on this trip, eh, Frank? He fell into your first trap so easily that it ought to encourage us to set another."

"A confession from him would save us a lot of work, of course," agreed Edwards, "but I scarcely think that we could manage to bring it about, and, if we failed, we should be worse off than we are now, because he would know then that we suspect him and would be on his guard against us henceforth."

"I don't think we should fail," replied Meador. "The fellow showed that his nerves are on edge by the panic-stricken manner in which he pitched that knife overboard."

"I believe we could scare him out of his wits if we can hit upon the right means. How about haunting him for the rest of the voyage with the ghost of his victim? I have heard of murderers being forced into confession by having their fears of the supernatural played upon."

"But where could we get the ghost?" inquired Edwards with an amused smile.

"That would be easy. I'll gladly volunteer for the job myself. Remember what a success I was as a ghost when we played 'Hamlet' at college? Wrapped in a sheet smeared with phosphorus I could parade the decks or visit him in his stateroom every night, and I'll wager that I'd soon have him in a state of collapse."

Edwards shook his head.

"No, I'm afraid that wouldn't work. Selling doesn't impress me as being the

kind of man who would be scared by a fake ghost. You've given me an idea, though, Jack. We might try haunting him by wireless."

"By wireless?" echoed Meador and the two women, regarding Edwards with mystification.

"Yes. I think I've got a plan which would break down his nerve and cause him to confess, if anything would!"

They gathered around him eagerly as he outlined his scheme.

"We shall have to take the wireless operator of this ship into our confidence, as we'll need his assistance. Every day he will hand me a wireless message apparently coming from the United States, although as a matter of fact they will be written by ourselves.

"Those messages will all be on the subject of the murder of old Colonel Reynolds. They will be addressed to me in my capacity as counsel for the man condemned to die for the murder.

"The first message will merely state that new evidence has been obtained which indicates that my client is innocent. The second will go a little further, and will state that witnesses who saw the murder committed have been discovered. Additional messages will explain how the crime was perpetrated from the elevated structure at Bayside Drive and Carboy Street, and how the authorities are working on a clue which is expected to reveal the identity of the assassin.

"Then I shall be informed by wireless that the police have positive proof that a man named Chester Selling is the murderer; and, lastly, I shall receive word that it has been learned that Selling is on board this ship, and that detectives will be waiting for him with a warrant at quarantine."

"And, of course, you will allow Selling to see all these messages?" exclaimed Meador excitedly.

"Exactly. I will let him see the first one, and you can depend upon it that his curiosity and fears will be so aroused by it that he will haunt the wireless room every day and manage

to get a glimpse of the others, which, of course, our friend the operator will make it easy for him to do.

"My idea is that he will be badly scared when he learns that it has become known how the murder was committed; he will be panic-stricken when he learns that the police suspect him, and he will be so terrified when he finds out that detectives will be waiting for him with a warrant that it ought to be an easy matter for us to get a confession out of him."

"A bully plan, Frank!" exclaimed Meador enthusiastically. "I congratulate you on it. I feel sure it will succeed."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THIRD DEGREE BY WIRELESS.

THERE was one circumstance regarding Chester Selling which greatly puzzled Edwards and his friends, and that was the calmness and indifference with which the former viewed the presence of Mrs. Jack Meador on board the ship.

They had expected that as soon as he saw her and learned that she was the wife of a friend of Edwards, Selling would seek an interview with the young woman and endeavor by threats to prevent her from disclosing the fact that she had seen him on Bayside Drive upon the night of Colonel Reynolds's murder.

He made no such attempt, however, nor did he seem to be at all worried over the fact that she could break down the alibi he had constructed.

"Maybe he has figured out that Mrs. Meador cannot betray his secret without also revealing her own, and therefore he is confident that she will not dare to say a word to us on the subject," suggested Edwards.

"Yes, that may be," replied Meador, "but I've got a different theory, which I'm inclined to believe is the right one. My opinion is that the reason he isn't worrying is that he hasn't the slightest

idea that my wife saw him on Bayside Drive that night."

"But he must know that I saw him!" exclaimed Mrs. Meador. "I couldn't help turning around and looking right at him as he started to run after the bus, and he must have noticed the look of alarm on my face."

"I don't believe that he noticed you at all," declared her husband. "I don't believe that he was running after the bus on your account. My theory is that he was trying to get aboard because he spied his grandfather, Colonel Reynolds, up there."

"He thought that by riding on top of that bus he would have a good chance to murder the old man, and that is why he was running after it."

"When he tripped and fell and found that he couldn't catch up with the omnibus, he suddenly remembered that Bayside Drive runs under the elevated railroad structure at Carboy Street, and that by taking a train up-town he could get to that point ahead of the bus."

"I believe that is what he proceeded to do. He got off the train at the Chalmers Street station, which is one block above Carboy Street, walked along the track until he reached a point directly above the path of the north-bound Bayside Drive omnibuses, and crouched there until the bus on which the colonel sat came along—and then he killed the poor old man."

"Sounds like a good theory," commented Edwards. "But wait a minute! You're overlooking a circumstance which knocks it out entirely. How about that package containing the necklace which the conductor found lying on the rear platform at Almar Street, just after Mrs. Meador stepped off the bus?"

"As you know, Almar Street is several blocks south of Carboy, and therefore that necklace must have been taken from the colonel before the elevated structure was reached. Who could have taken it? How are you going to account for that robbery?"

"I think I can offer an explanation," volunteered Mrs. Meador. "It is only a theory, to be sure, but it is probably the right one."

"I don't believe there was any robbery at all. I don't believe that necklace was stolen from the colonel. I think he dropped it at his feet, and that I was the innocent cause of its being picked up by the conductor down-stairs."

"I remember that when I left the bus the old gentleman was asleep. It is probable that when he dozed off, the package containing the necklace fell out of his hands, and that, as I got up and started toward the stairway, the package got caught in the hem of my skirt and was dragged by me down-stairs and deposited at the feet of the conductor."

"Fine!" exclaimed Edwards enthusiastically, while Mildred Sudbury clapped her hands, and Meador bestowed upon his wife a look of ardent admiration. "I think you've hit the nail on the head, Mrs. Meador. Your clever theory clears up the only part of this mystery which remained unsolved."

"All that remains to be done now," declared Meador, "is to get a confession out of that scoundrel."

"I think we'll do it, too," said Edwards. "I'll go interview the wireless operator and arrange about those fake messages. With his help we ought to be able to put the scheme through."

An hour later Chester Selling, meeting Edwards on the deck, noticed that the lawyer's face was wreathed in smiles.

"You seem happy," remarked Selling.

"I am," replied Edwards. "I've just received good news by wireless. Read this."

He handed the other man a typewritten marconigram, which bore the following message:

New evidence discovered to-day indicating Davenport innocent Reynolds murder. Stay of execution granted. Will send further details later.

MORTIMER.

"It is from my chief clerk," explained Edwards. "Mortimer is too careful a fellow to send such a message unless he were absolutely sure, and, therefore, I feel confident that my client will go free, and that the real murderer of your grandfather is about to be brought to justice."

An uneasy expression flitted across Selling's face, but was immediately replaced by a scornful smile. "I congratulate you if the news is true," he said. "I doubt it, however. I am convinced that that conductor murdered my grandfather. Nobody else could have done it."

Edwards and his friends noticed with much satisfaction that Selling spent a great deal of time in the wireless-room the next day, and made every effort to gain the good will and friendship of the operator.

He was so successful in this respect that the latter did not object when Selling looked over his shoulder while he was transposing on the typewriter a message which had just come in by wireless (apparently) addressed to Edwards. This message read:

Witnesses found who saw Reynolds murder committed. Swear Davenport is innocent. Colonel was stabbed by man who stood on elevated structure at Bayside Drive and Carboy Street. Police have good description of assassin and clue as to identity. Will advise further later.

MORTIMER.

Edwards, meeting Selling as the latter was coming out of the wireless-room, noticed that his face was pale, and that there was a dazed, scared look in his eyes.

"The scheme is working fine so far," the lawyer reported exultantly to his friends.

The next day another message addressed to Edwards appeared to come in as Selling was hanging around the wireless-room. Over the operator's shoulder the startled man read:

Police now have name Reynolds's murderer, but won't reveal it. Detec-

tives are watching all incoming liners, as they have information he left England recently. They appear confident will get him.

Selling's countenance as he perused this message was waxen in its rigidity and bloodlessness. He staggered out of the place and slunk off to his state-room.

"We've got him groggy now," chuckled Meador to Edwards. "Another blow, Frank, and he'll be all in."

"That blow will come to-morrow," replied Edwards with a smile of satisfaction. "I'll wager that when he sees the next fake marconigram he'll go to pieces and be ripe for a confession."

That Selling was beside himself with fear was evidenced by the fact that he began to drink heavily. By the end of that day he was so intoxicated that he had to be carried to his cabin.

The following morning he did not appear at the breakfast table, and Edwards found him nervously pacing the deck, his face haggard, his eyes blood-shot—so changed in a day that Edwards could scarcely repress a shudder.

At noon the unfortunate man staggered into the wireless-room.

"Any messages arrive for Mr. Edwards to-day?" he inquired of the operator thickly.

"Not yet," replied the man at the instrument with a smile. "But say—why are you so interested in his messages? I'm not supposed to let you see them, you know. I'd lose my job if it were discovered that I was letting you hang around here prying into other people's affairs."

"No one shall ever know," promised Selling hoarsely. "You are in no danger of being found out."

He plunged his hand in his pocket and produced a ten-dollar bill.

"Here's a little present for you, old man. Take it as a mark of my appreciation of your courtesy—and be sure to let me see the next message that comes for Edwards before he gets it."

Even as he spoke the wireless instrument began to crackle and splutter.

It was a message which was not intended for that ship at all—a fragment of conversation between two distant vessels which the apparatus had picked up—but the operator began to write out a despatch to Franklin Edwards as naturally as if it were actually coming in.

The man at his shoulder gave vent to a gasp of terror as the wireless man's pencil traced the following startling words:

In spite of police have learned name man they seek as murderer. He is Lester Selling—Colonel Reynolds's grandson.—MORTIMER.

"Lester Selling," remarked the wireless operator, turning with a smile to the man behind him. "Why, that's almost the same name as yours. Queer coincidence, isn't it?"

"Yes," gasped the other, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "It is a queer coincidence. Only a coincidence though—nothing more."

He reeled out of the room, and as he disappeared, Edwards and Meador entered.

"How did he take it?" inquired the former.

"Very badly," chuckled the operator. "I never in my life saw such a scared and despairing look on a man's face. I declare I almost felt sorry for him. Are you sure that he really is the murderer?"

"Can you doubt it?" replied Edwards with a grim smile. "Surely his behavior is sufficient proof of his guilt."

"I guess the time is now ripe to put him through a rigid cross-examination and get the truth out of him," declared Meador. "I don't suppose he's got enough nerve left to resist us. Third degree by wireless is a great institution. I congratulate you upon inventing it, Frank—hello! What was that?"

His exclamation was caused by a muffled report which seemed to come from somewhere below.

With a meaning glance at each other, Edwards and Meador dashed out of

the wireless room and ran below to that part of the liner in which they knew Selling's cabin was located.

The door of the stateroom was locked; a little wreath of blue smoke was curling through the cracks, and there was a significant smell of gunpowder which caused the two lawyers to rush at the door and break it in with their shoulders.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Edwards, his face white as a sheet. "I didn't foresee this outcome. We might have guessed that he'd do it."

"Didn't think he'd have the nerve," gasped Meador. "By Jiminy! He has done it though!"

They were in the stateroom now, and their gaze fell upon the figure of Selling stretched upon the floor, a revolver clutched in his right hand.

"He isn't dead," exclaimed Meador, kneeling down beside the would-be suicide. "But the doctor, quick, Jack! Hurry!"

Selling opened his eyes and stared fearfully at the man bending over him.

"Don't get the doctor," he whimpered. "I don't want to be fixed up. Let me cheat the chair. Surely it can't make any difference to you if I die this way. Don't be too hard on me."

Meador came back with the ship's surgeon, the captain, and several passengers at his heels. The man of medicine knelt beside the prostrate form and shook his head hopelessly.

"Can't live another hour," he declared as he selected a hypodermic from his pocket-case and injected a stimulant.

"Selling," exclaimed Edwards hoarsely, "do you hear what the doctor says? You're done for. Your wish to cheat the chair is going to be gratified. But won't you say the words which will free that innocent young man who is awaiting execution for your crime? Surely it can do you no good to withhold anything now. Confess while there is still time."

"Confess?" exclaimed the dying man with a hollow laugh. "What need

is there of my confession? The police don't require that. They've got me dead sure. I didn't think they were clever enough to find out how the murder was done—but they were, confound 'em."

"Then you admit that you killed your grandfather, Colonel Joseph Reynolds?" demanded Edwards eagerly.

"Of course I admit it," exclaimed Selling fretfully. "What's the use of denying it? The police have got me dead to rights, I tell you. I saw those wireless messages."

"Why did you kill him?" demanded Edwards.

"Because I was broke and needed the money which I knew he was going to leave me," replied the dying man with a groan. "I couldn't wait, so I hurried things along."

His eyes closed, and he lapsed into unconsciousness. Edwards turned eagerly to the little group gathered in the stateroom.

"Captain, doctor, and all you gentlemen present," he exclaimed, "I shall call upon you all, when this ship reaches port, to bear witness to what you have just heard, and save an innocent young man from a terrible fate."

He hurried above to the deck where Mrs. Meador and Mildred Sudbury were waiting, and seized the latter by both hands.

"Little girl," he exclaimed, "I congratulate you. Your brother's troubles are at an end."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

SELLING died before the liner reached port.

Edwards and Meador felt somewhat conscience stricken at the thought that they had hounded him to his death, but reassured themselves by the argument that probably he would have taken his own life anyway, later on, when arrested for the murder of old Colonel Reynolds.

"And even if he had not committed suicide, he would have died in the electric chair, so we've got no reason to reproach ourselves," declared Meador.

"I suppose not," replied Edwards; "and yet, if I had foreseen the tragic outcome of our experiment, I don't think I would have tried it. I thought the fellow would break down and confess. It never entered my mind at all that he would be scared into killing himself."

"It's probably better for all concerned that it turned out that way," said Meador philosophically. "He died the death he preferred, and the State is saved the expense of his trial."

"It's a lucky thing for your client, Frank, that the fellow confessed before he passed away. Even though he committed suicide, it would have been a hard job to establish legal proof that he murdered old Colonel Reynolds if he had died with his lips sealed. In the eyes of the law, suicide is not always confession, you know."

"Yes," agreed Edwards. "It is a great piece of good fortune for us that he admitted his guilt."

Davenport Sudbury's freedom followed as a result of Selling's ante-mortem confession.

Armed with affidavits sworn to by the captain of the ship, the doctor, and the half-dozen passengers who had heard the dying man admit his guilt, Edwards had no great difficulty in persuading the authorities that there was no just reason why the young Englishman should remain in prison, and every just reason why he shouldn't.

His long confinement and the awful suspense he had gone through had so changed Davenport that Edwards scarcely recognized him when he stepped out of jail, and his sister burst into tears at the pathetic sight he presented.

Considering all that he had been through, the young Englishman was surprisingly cheerful, however.

"Somehow I felt sure all along that they would never send me to the chair,"

he declared. "The fact that I had you for a lawyer, old chap, made me confident that I was bound to come out of my troubles all right," and he wrung Edwards's hand fervently.

"I am afraid we shall never be able to repay Mr. Edwards for what he has done for us," declared Mildred Sudbury, her voice vibrant with emotion.

"Oh, nonsense," retorted Edwards. "I haven't done much. It is your sister, Davenport, who is entitled to most of the credit for bringing about your freedom. You've got the greatest little sister in the world, my boy."

"I always knew that," and Davenport gave Mildred's hand an appreciative squeeze.

Davenport met the Meadors at dinner that evening, and was very much astonished to recognize in Mrs. Meador the mysterious young woman who had ridden on top of his omnibus on that fatal trip.

He was as yet in ignorance as to just how his release had been effected, and when the whole story was told to him he was filled with remorse to think that he had suspected the pretty young woman who sat opposite him at table of

being the assassin of Colonel Reynolds. He was profuse in his apologies to her, and was much relieved by her assurance that she bore him no resentment.

"There was just as much reason to suspect me as there was to suspect you, Mr. Sudbury," she said. "It really did look as if one of us two must have been the guilty person. It shows how unreliable circumstantial evidence is."

"I suppose that after the rough deal you have had over here you will go back to England cordially detesting America?" remarked Meador to Davenport. "I guess we can't blame you if you do take that view of it."

The young Englishman shook his head.

"No, with circumstantial evidence so strongly against me I don't blame that jury for finding me guilty, nor the judge for sentencing me to death. I shall go back to England without any grudge against America."

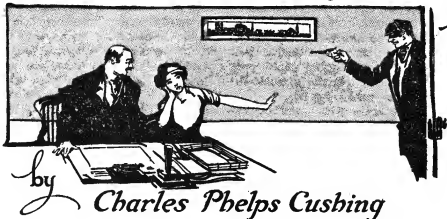
"I am glad to hear you say that, old man," exclaimed Franklin Edwards fervently, "because I intend to persuade your sister to become an American citizen."

THE END.

## WINTER NIGHT.

How beautiful the silent winter night!  
 The Dipper of the stars brims in the north;  
 Orion to his hunting, faring forth,  
 Goes up the sky with belt of flaming light.  
 The hills and valleys all with snow are white—  
 Oh, white as though the soul of April kind  
 Came back an angel on the wand'ring wind,  
 And dropped a world-wide feather in its flight!  
 Ah! long ago the glow of sunset fled;  
 Yet does its splendor with the stars abide  
 Immortal, though the shades are dark beneath;  
 And long has summer's rosy self been dead,  
 Yet does her glowing beauty, purified,  
 Triumphant live in winter's world of death!  
*Edward Wilbur Mason.*

# Modern Weapons



by *Charles Phelps Cushing*

**I**N the hollow blackness of the factory office old man Jowett's growling dictation rumbled and reverberated like the sound of one of his own machines. The stenographer's pencil raced fast to keep pace. The only illumination came from two shaded desk-lights; and so dim was their radiance outside of the area of desk-tops that Jowett had to squint and poke his heavy, grizzled head to one side when he tried to make out the time by a wall clock.

"Umph! Nearly ten."

The comment broke in on the course of the dictation; and the girl, her cheeks flushed with haste and excitement, looked up inquiringly—a dark-haired, brown-eyed girl that any amateur at character-reading could have named as a dreamer and an idealist. Jowett, heavy-jawed, with a wrinkled face as unemotional as a professional gambler's, made a vivid contrast. He was all that she was not—old, shrewd, stolid, and grim.

"Ten—ten o'clock, Miss Davis," Jowett explained. "I just happened to think about how late it's getting. We'll shut up shop as soon as I have

this last letter off my mind. Where were we?"

"On account of a strike of discontented mill-hands," she read.

He brusquely continued the dictation: "—mill-hands, many of our deliveries have been delayed, and your esteemed order of the 16th inst. among them. We ask your kind indulgence for a few more days on this account. We are confident that the trouble will quickly be settled. Our plant is protected now with a heavy guard, and we are operating two of our five departments to their full capacity. Trusting you will appreciate—"

It was only the faint creak of a hinge that interrupted, but both Jowett and the girl heard and hesitated. A door at the darkest corner of the room opened. Jowett's swivel-chair screeched as he leaned back and peered over the tops of his glasses.

A lanky, slouching, broad-shouldered man advanced. His face was masked, and an automatic revolver shone steely-blue in a muscular hand.

"I guess you're Jowett!" He spit out the words like an accusation, and flourished the revolver.



"What of it?" answered Jowett, as imperturbable as before.

The intruder rather awkwardly waved the weapon.

"Hurry up—what you want?" Jowett demanded sharply.

The man seemed trying to gain self-possession, and played for time like an actor who forgets his lines. Rather haltingly he advanced another step, and leveled the blue steel at Jowett's head.

"Put that thing up, you fool! Put it up, I tell you!" The old man's voice was harsh and masterful.

The newcomer still appeared to waver.

"Say something!" Jowett thundered. "What are you here for?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I came here for trouble. That's what I mean." The man's anger seemed to rise as he progressed. "I came here to beat your fat head into a jelly. My fingers were hungry for the feel of your throat. I don't want to shoot you. I want to beat you and hear you groan every time my fist mashes your bloated cheeks!"

Jowett turned to Miss Davis, whose agitation was approaching hysteria.

"Don't worry, girl," he said comfortingly. "Let's not have a scene. Maybe we'd better let him have his way." To the intruder he continued: "Anything else?"

"Just this else—I'm gonna to do it, and do it now."

Jowett calmly rose, laid his glasses on the desk, and took a step forward.

"Go ahead!" he urged. "Smash me! I won't stop you. You've got me cornered."

The intruder charily pocketed the revolver. Then deliberately, almost grimly, he squared away like a prize-fighter before a punching-bag and drove his fist into Jowett's face. The old man crumpled and went down in a pathetic heap.

Swiftly, with dramatic viciousness, the assailant kicked the prostrate figure until it unlimbered backward. Miss Davis was screaming; she seized the

telephone-receiver, but an intolerable two seconds' delay was giving the attacker more opportunities. He was ripping and tearing at Jowett's throat. Fearful that another moment or two might mean murder, she flung herself forward and clutched at the assailant's hair. He shook himself loose and ran.

When she felt Jowett's pulse and found it beating the girl recovered her self-possession somewhat and telephoned for help. When the manufacturer opened his eyes half a minute later she was sprinkling his face with ice-water and sobbing convulsively.

"They said this wouldn't be," she pleaded, beside him on her knees. "Coprini promised—promised me by everything he held dear!"

Jowett had heard.

"Coprini?" he asked very weakly. "Coprini, the striker? What have you got to do with Coprini, girl?"

"I loved him," she confessed. "He sent me here to work so I could tell him all your plans. 'We just want to get our rights,' Coprini said. There was to be no violence, no blood—" The girl shuddered. "And now they try murder! They make me an accomplice! Coprini promised, and he lied! I'm a spy, Mr. Jowett! I'm a spy! I'm ashamed to look you in the face. You never can forgive me. I never can redeem myself."

Feebly, but with little more emotion than if he were dictating a business letter, Jowett reassured her:

"I'm all right, girl. You'll not feel so bad when you clear your conscience. Just tell what happened. When the reporters come tell them everything."

## II.

NEWSPAPERMEN called it a "big story"—the girl spy in the inner office of the millionaire manufacturer, the assault, the confession of the spy, the mysterious entry and escape of the assailant in spite of bars and guards.

Coprini's denials that the strikers were concerned in the plot had little ap-

parent effect on public opinion in the face of the girl's eloquent confession. The police were unable to fasten any evidence of guilt on him, but the cause of the strikers weakened with every day that followed the assault. Finally old man Jowett won his fight without making even a trivial concession.

Miss Davis kept her place as Jowett's secretary. In spite of all the old man's comforting assurance, however, conscience kept harassing her.

"You oughtn't to take life so hard, girl," Jowett told her one afternoon a month after the strike was settled. "Honest, I don't harbor even the slightest grudge. Fact! I'd like nothing better than to see you marry into my own family. Young George thinks a lot of you, too. There's no mistake about that, and he could give you a home that would make any of your friends die of jealousy. Better take him. Forget that little beating I got a couple of months ago. Perk up, and forget that dreamer Coprini!"

"I wonder," the girl musingly answered, "how you'd like to feel that you once came near being an accomplice to a murder?"

Old man Jowett drew his chair closer to the girl's typewriter-desk and leaned forward confidentially.

"I can't stand to see you go on this way any more, Miss Davis," he began. "When I tell you I have nothing to forgive you for, it's exactly what I mean, for the story you told the news-

papers was the thing that turned sentiment my way and ended the strike."

A grim smile began to show at the corners of the old man's mouth as he paused.

"Look here," he continued, "I've a confession of my own to make. I knew you were a spy. I never let you in on anything really important. In the end I thought out a way to make use of you to win my fight. I wasn't hurt much in that little fracas—just enough for purposes of stage realism. You see, I hired that young fellow to beat me. A ten o'clock appointment. You sat in to help at my own game."

The girl's head dropped forward.

"Coprini—my Coprini, then, didn't lie?" she pleaded, aghast.

"No-o-o!" Jowett answered blusteringly. "And I never said he did. You jumped at conclusions, my girl."

She seemed dazed as she got to her feet and mechanically took down her jacket and hat from a hook.

"Coprini! Oh, my poor Coprini!" she choked.

Half stumbling, half running, she fled.

"Dreamers — dreamers both!" old man Jowett muttered to himself. "Spirits too fine for my business world. They don't know how to fight with modern weapons. I'm a little sorry for son George, but, hang me, if I don't hope she finds her Coprini again!"

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### THE WIND SPEAKS.

WHEN I blow from the frozen north,  
With an icy tonic rife,  
My voice is a trumpet, pealing forth,  
And I shout of life.

When I come from the balmy south,  
Where the sky is blue above,  
My voice is lulled by the rose's mouth,  
And I breathe of love.

*William H. Hayne.*

# Wizard or Crook

An illustration showing a wizard in a pointed hat and a crook in a top hat, both holding wands, standing on a rocky outcrop. The wizard is on the left, and the crook is on the right.

by  
Casper Carson

(A NOVELETTE.)

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GALL OF HIM.

**T**HE commissioner of police frowned at the intrusion of a messenger with a card into the privacy of his inner office.

He was grappling at the moment with one of the most difficult problems of his career, and the last thing he wanted was to be disturbed.

Called to the head of the police department in response to the universal demand for a practical policeman, Commissioner McConnell unquestionably filled the bill.

He had served in his day as the ordinary "pavement bull," had been promoted to roundsman and sergeant, and then transferred to the detective bureau, making good, as the phrase goes, in each successive capacity.

With the offer and acceptance of a post in the government secret service, he added such new laurels to his record that eventually he was able to establish a very successful private detective agency.

And now, at last, he was back on the force again—back on the force, with all his knowledge gained from the inside of its strength and weakness, yet with the wider perspective and freedom from cabals and entangling alliances of a virtual outsider.

Great things were expected of McConnell, and rightly so; for, after all is said and done, the chief business of a police force is catching criminals, and there was no gainsaying the fact that McConnell was a great detective.

True, he didn't at all suggest the rather fantastic creations of the fiction writers for such a rôle. With his rather rotund body, bullet head, and heavy, curled mustache, he came nearer perhaps to the figure of the blundering professional "cop" whom these chroniclers so delight to picture.

His chase of a crook was usually free from weird or eccentric features, and he would about as soon think of flying as to get down on his stomach and wriggle around with a magnifying-glass in search of clues; but he got there, just the same.

The Le Clair diamond robbery, the Conover counterfeiting case, the Daingerfield public lands conspiracy are matters which attest his skill and ability at following up an involved and baffling trail.

But here, at the very outset of his new undertaking, and with the myriad eyes of the public upon him, he found himself confronted with a job which seemed to defy solution.

Look as it which way he would, he had to confess himself fairly stumped. There was apparently no clue or start-

ing-point from which to begin an investigation.

Yet, knowing that to every puzzle there must be a satisfactory answer of some kind, he had shut himself away from all interruption, and with head between his hands, and all his faculties concentrated on the rather meager details supplied him, was vainly striving to discern some light.

It may be imagined, therefore, how welcome was the entrance of the messenger with the card at such a juncture.

"Some politician, I suppose," he growled, "come to beg off for one of that bunch of captains I transferred yesterday? Why the dickens can't those fellows—"

Then, as he reached out for the bit of pasteboard, and his eye fell on the engraved name with its penciled line of explanation underneath, the storm broke.

"Mr. E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell!" he exploded with thunderous disgust. "In reference to obtaining a position on the force!"

The hapless messenger cringed before the blast of outraged wrath he saw coming; but, of a sudden, McConnell's humor changed.

In spite of himself, his lips began to twitch, a twinkle crept into his blue eye, and then he burst into a roar of laughter.

It was really too absurd that his weighty deliberations should be called upon to yield to the demands of a mere job-seeker—a job-seeker named Bolingbroke Ramsdell, at that.

All at once his face grew serious, and he turned a keen, searching glance upon the waiting subordinate.

"Charlie," he said dryly, "you've been with the department here about five years, more or less, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And in that time how many green-horns with an ambition to join the force have asked to see the commissioner?"

"Probably a thousand, sir; maybe more."

"Exactly. And what answer do you usually make to them?"

"Why," with the glib readiness of a well-learned lesson, "I always tell 'em to make a written application in due form, and then go to the civil service commission for examination."

"Ever bring in any of their cards to the commissioner before?"

"No, sir," confessed the man hesitatingly, "I don't believe I ever did, except maybe once or twice, when a district leader, or somebody like that, came along with 'em."

The commissioner sat silent for a moment or two.

"Er—Charlie," he inquired at length, "just how much did this guy slip you?"

The messenger straightened up, and met the probing gaze bent on him almost with an expression of relief.

"Not a cent, commissioner," he disavowed earnestly. "I knew you'd be thinking that; but it isn't so, sir. On my honor, it isn't."

McConnell was frankly puzzled. Shrewd judge of men that he was, he knew instinctively that the messenger was telling the truth.

"Is the fellow a friend of yours, then?" he hazarded.

"Never saw him before in my life, sir."

McConnell's patience, never his strongest virtue, gave completely away at this.

"Look here, my man," he snapped; "if you think this is a place for horse-play or kidding matches, you've got another guess coming. I want you to understand that—"

"Oh, no, commissioner!" broke in the subordinate tremblingly. "Oh, no, sir! I'd be the last person in the world to try anything like that."

"What the deuce do you mean, then, by bringing me a thing like this"—contemptuously flipping the card with his forefinger—"when I expressly told you that I was not to be disturbed except for imperative business?"

The culprit stood silent, looking

down at the floor, and uneasily shuffling his feet.

"Answer me."

"I—I couldn't help it, sir."

"Couldn't help it?"

"No, sir. I knew I had no business to bring that card in to you; but—but—" He flushed guiltily, and seemed to become more confused than ever. "Well, sir, that young fellow somehow has a way of getting what he wants."

"H-m. He has, has he?" Again McConnell's eyes narrowed to a glance of suspicious scrutiny. "I guess," he decided, "that I'll take a look at him for myself. Tell him to come in."

Then, as the messenger turned away, a sudden realization came to the commissioner which twisted his lips into a wry sort of a smile.

"Has a way of getting what he wants, eh?" he muttered. "Well, by Jove, it begins to look like it when I give up my valuable time to a chap with an errand like his!"

## CHAPTER II.

### SOME REVELATIONS.

McCONNELL had pictured to himself, from Charlie's description, a forceful, swaggering sort of type—something of a cross between the bouncer of a Bowery saloon and the persuasive-tongued advance man of a "ten, twenty and thirty" repertoire company; but, to his surprise, the visitor who edged deprecatingly into his presence was meek, mild, and unimposing as buttermilk.

"He looks like a cartoonist's idea of a kid from Boston," thought the commissioner, turning away to hide a grin; and, indeed, the swift characterization was far from inexact, in view of its subject's round, moon face adorned by a pair of enormous, heavy-lensed spectacles, and the attenuated frame manifestly too small for his bulging head.

McConnell promptly repented the rash impulse which had led him into

granting an interview. His manner showed plainly that he intended to make the incident brief as decency would permit.

"Your name's Ramsdell, eh?" he grunted, refreshing his memory by a glance at the card he still held between his fingers.

"Yes, sir." The caller spoke in a thin, high-pitched voice. "E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell."

It was beyond human nature to resist such a chance for a rise.

"Some class to that, isn't there?" McConnell commented in mock admiration. "What's the 'E' for?"

"Elizur," confessed Ramsdell.

"Eliza?"

"No, no. 'Elizur, with an 'ur.' I merely use the initial, however, because so many people fall into the same error as you; and Eliza is a feminine name, you know."

He made the explanation quite placidly, and evidently without the slightest suspicion that he was being rigged; so the commissioner, feeling a trifle flat, returned a bit hastily to the task of getting rid of him.

"You want a position on the force, eh?" he said brusquely. "Well, I'm sorry; but I don't believe I can help you. You will have to make application through the regular channels, and—"

"Yes, yes, I know all that," interrupted the applicant. "But, you see, Mr. Commissioner, I am not after a position on the uniformed force."

"No?" rejoined McConnell, with a slightly ironic inflection. He was about to inquire if it was a job as inspector or deputy commissioner that the other had in mind; but Ramsdell was already proceeding.

"No," he repeated. "I am inclined to consider the detective bureau the proper field for my talents."

"Oh," groaned McConnell to himself, "one of those ginks with the *Sherlock Holmes* bug in his nut! What he ought to do is send a quarter off to some fake detective agency and get a

nice little tin star to amuse himself with."

Aloud, however, he remarked, rising as though to terminate the interview, that he saw very little chance of accomplishing any such desires.

"You see," he explained curtly, "under the law, all appointments to the detective bureau come in the nature of promotions from the regular rank and file."

"Still," persisted the other, declining to take any notice of his evident dismissal, "you do sometimes make use of outside assistance, don't you?"

"Very infrequently. And I certainly know of no matters on hand at present which call for such a step."

The young man thrust his spectacled face slightly forward.

"Not even the Poe case?" he queried.

McConnell sat down rather abruptly.

"What the—what do you know about the Poe case?" he ejaculated sharply.

"Simply that Darius Poe, the old book-collector, has had stolen from him the famous Wickliffe Bible, for which he paid a record price of seventy-five thousand dollars at the J. V. Emory auction sale last week, as detailed so extensively in the papers at the time.

"The book was kept for safety," he went on, "together with a number of Mr. Poe's most highly cherished treasures, in a massive safe in the library he has had built back of his residence on Madison Avenue. There are no indications of a burglarious entry to the building, nor does the safe show any signs of having been tampered with. Moreover, the keys to the library never left Mr. Poe's person from the time he locked the door at ten o'clock last night until he opened up again at nine o'clock this morning; yet, when he went to the safe, he found the Bible—the chief prize of his collection—gone. Instead, there lay in the safe an impudent letter informing him that unless he deposited twenty-five thou-

sand dollars in the safe for the return of the book the valuable volume would be destroyed.

"Those," the caller concluded equally, "are, I believe, the main facts in the rather interesting affair."

"No." The police commissioner smashed his fist down on his desk, his eyes narrowing to pin-points. "There is one fact yet which has got to be explained to me. How did you get wise to all this?"

"Ah!" The moon face with the big spectacles beamed bafflingly at him. "You will have to excuse me from answering that question, Mr. Commissioner."

"But," expostulated McConnell angrily, "there were only two people who knew of that letter you mention—myself and old man Poe. And he promised me faithfully that he would not speak of it to a living soul. If he's going to double-cross me by blabbing stuff right and left, how does he ever expect me to run down his moldy old book for him?"

"I assure you on my honor," piped Ramsdell, "that I did not get my intelligence from Mr. Poe. No more than I got my information in regard to the abduction of Miss Ethel Vorhees from the Vorhees family."

If this sedately uttered remark had been a dynamite bomb it couldn't have created much greater consternation.

McConnell sprang to his feet, his eyes almost goggling out on his cheeks.

"Your information in regard to—what?" he thundered.

"In regard to the abduction of Miss Ethel Vorhees," rejoined Ramsdell demurely; "since I suppose that is what her disappearance must be considered."

No wonder that the commissioner was thunderstruck. The disappearance in question—that of a Riverside Drive heiress from her home some three weeks before—was one of the most carefully guarded secrets at headquarters; for the young lady's family, although spending money like

water in the endeavor to trace up her whereabouts, were using every effort to avoid publicity.

Even among the police only McConnell himself and one or two of his most trusted lieutenants were in possession of the actual details; yet this amazing stranger referred to the affair as casually as though it were a matter of common newspaper knowledge.

"So, you know about that, too?" stammered the now thoroughly discomfited official.

E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell merely nodded in a bored sort of way, as though there were nothing especially remarkable in the fact.

"Maybe, then"—a shrewd gleam flashed into McConnell's heavy-lidded eyes—"you can tell where the girl is?"

"Maybe I could find out," rejoined the other significantly, "if—I was attached to the detective bureau."

"How?"

Ramsdell wagged his head.

"That is my secret, commissioner. But," he added, "I think I can deliver the goods. In fact, I am very well satisfied that I can clear up the mystery not only in regard to Miss Vorhees, but also with respect to the Poe Bible.

"You know," removing his glasses and showing a pair of pale, expressionless eyes, "Charlie, the messenger, told you I had a way of getting what I wanted."

"Humph!" sniffed McConnell. "I suppose there's no use asking how you persuaded that rascal to bring in your card, eh?"

"Well, I don't know." The other considered. "It must be in confidence, though. Promise me that you won't give Charlie the worst of it on my account."

"All right, then," as the commissioner gave somewhat eager assent. "It was simple enough. I happened to learn that Charlie was guilty of some technical violations of the rules,

and gave him the choice between bringing in my card and having them reported."

"But how did you learn of these infractions of Charlie's? The men generally manage to keep those things pretty dark."

"Ah," said Ramsdell, with an apologetic smile, "believe me, I know quite a little about the inside workings of the police department. Just how I know, though, is another of my little secrets."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BARGAIN.

McCONNELL, taken by surprise with the series of unexpected jolts given him by his visitor, had rather lost control of himself for the moment, but now he rapidly caught his faculties together.

With a decided increase of respect in his manner toward the other, he passed over a box of long, black cigars to Ramsdell and selected one for himself.

"I think, Mr. Ramsdell," he said thoughtfully between puffs, "that maybe you and I can do some business. Just what is the nature of the proposition you want to make to me?"

"A sort of mutual benefit association, Mr. Commissioner," responded Ramsdell with a diffident smile. "You—as I understand it—are out to make a record for yourself in your new position, while I frankly confess that I am after nothing but money. There are big rewards offered constantly for the clearing up of crimes and mysteries, and, without being officially attached to the department, I want all such cases turned over to me, and the rewards paid into my hands on their satisfactory solution. In other words, you can take the glory and I will take the coin. Doesn't that strike you as a fair deal, in view of the fact that I guarantee you success in every instance?"

"You guarantee success?" Mc-

Connell's tone was skeptical as a result of his long years of detective experience.

"I guarantee it positively; and that, moreover, within two weeks from the time each case is taken up."

McConnell was fain to question the grounds for such absolute self-confidence, but, realizing that he would simply be told this was another "little secret," held his peace.

In the face of the disclosures made to him concerning the Poe and Vorhees matters, he was hardly in a position to scoff at any of Ramsdell's statements, no matter how staggering they might appear.

"Still," he submitted cautiously, "you must yourself agree, young man, that it's a rather dangerous proceeding to make an outsider free of all the inside information held by the police department. Before we close any bargain I guess I'll have to know a little more about you."

"Sure," assented Ramsdell cheerfully; "although I'm afraid there isn't much to tell. I am twenty-six years old, and was born at Tenallytown, Maryland. After leaving school I taught for a year in the Deaf-Mute Institute at Washington, and then, coming on to New York, took a degree in the natural sciences at Columbia, and since completing that have been doing post-graduate work along the same line with the idea of becoming an instructor. In the mean time I support myself by tutoring backward students."

"So, that's your biography, eh?" McConnell smiled in spite of himself. "Hardly what one would call preparation for being a detective, is it? But excuse me a minute; there is an order I have forgotten to send out," punching a button on his desk for the messenger, as he hurriedly scribbled a line or two on a sheet of paper and slipped it into an envelope.

Then, with this despatched, the commissioner turned again to the business of questioning Ramsdell and drawing

the latter out in regard to every point of his career.

A half or three-quarters of an hour later an answer was delivered to the "order" McConnell had sent out; for that, as may have been surmised, was merely a request to have Ramsdell looked up.

The commissioner glanced through it; then, with a slight frown, crumpled the slip up in his hands and tossed it into the waste-basket. It corroborated in every particular the statements the young man had made in regard to himself.

"Found what I told you just about straight, didn't you?" commented Ramsdell dryly.

McConnell flushed a little. Really, it was almost uncanny the way this fellow called the turn on him.

"Whatever I've found," he responded a bit tartly, "it's nothing that proves you in any way fitted to be a detective."

"Would you judge a horse by performance or pedigree?" returned the other quietly. "Come, come, commissioner, I think I've shown you enough to warrant you in giving me a chance. Let me have a try at this Poe Bible business, anyhow, and see if I don't make good."

The commissioner hesitated, then not altogether graciously yielded assent.

"Two of the most experienced men from the bureau, Brady and Schmitz, are up there now, looking over the ground," he said. "I'll phone up and tell them to let you into the library and give you every facility in getting at the facts."

And, true to his word, he did so as soon as his new assistant was started on his way.

But he also sent a supplementary message of which he had not spoken to Ramsdell.

"Keep your eye on that duck," he warned the detectives, "and try to find out if possible what he is up to. Don't let his looks deceive you. He



is, unless I'm greatly mistaken, the most dangerous crook I've ever run up against."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GOING OVER THE GROUND.

THE library of Darius Poe, the millionaire book-lover and collector, was a massive structure erected in the rear of his square, old-fashioned house on one of the fashionable avenues.

Built of huge blocks of granite, it presented almost the appearance of a fortress, for it was entirely without windows—the lighting and ventilation being managed by a system of skylights and vent-holes in the roof—while the only visible entrance was guarded by heavily barred and bolted doors of solid bronze.

True, there was another smaller door for Poe's private use, and connecting through a passageway with the residence, but that did not need to be taken into account, for the old gentleman always kept the keys to it in his own possession, even sleeping with them strung on a cord around his neck.

Obsessed, too, with the fear that some one might break in and steal some of his gathered treasures, the owner had fitted the place with every sort of burglar alarm.

"By Jove!" murmured E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell, as Detectives Brady and Schmitz showed him these various features according to their instructions from the commissioner, "it doesn't look as though there were any way to break in here, short of a blast of dynamite!"

"Pshaw! This is nothing," returned Brady and Schmitz with one voice. "Wait till you get inside."

They did not speak without reason. Inside, where the long rows of rare and valuable books stood in shelves, and where, spread out in glass cases, were manuscripts and parchment palimpsests, many of them worth a king's ransom, stood a ponderous steel safe,

walled up with granite, bedded in concrete, and protected by a powerful electric current.

"If anybody who didn't know the combination had laid a hand on that contraption, he'd have been dead before he knew what hit him," explained Brady.

"Yet the Bible was taken from inside it."

"Exactly. And that, too, without any drilling or blowing, and what's more, without the slightest sign to show how the thief got into the building. The doors were locked and bolted, the skylights fastened down, the alarms all in good working order, not a crack or grating open through which so much as a mouse could have wriggled."

"Perhaps old Mr. Poe may have turned the trick himself?" suggested Ramsdell.

"One of them sleep-walking stunts you mean, eh?" queried Brady. "No; we investigated that lead and made nothing of it. His valet, who sleeps in the same room on account of the old chap's having heart disease, and who is accustomed to waking at his slightest move, says he didn't make a stir from the time he turned in.

"Besides, there is the letter," Brady added. "Sure, a man would never have written anything like that and left it for himself."

"True, there is the letter," assented Ramsdell, as though he had just recalled its existence. "A rather unusual feature that, don't you think, Mr. Brady?"

"Unusual! I call it the most colossal piece of nerve I ever ran across. Why, just think of it! This guy tells the old man that in order to get his book back, he's got to put the \$25,000, of all places in the world, right in this very safe that's just been robbed. Looks like he didn't take much stock in all the bolts, and bars, and burglar alarms that's around here, doesn't it? According to that, the fellow feels free to walk in and out of here whenever

he pleases, and he isn't bothering about any steps that may be taken to stop him.

"That's what got old Poe so up in the air, you understand," he went on. "He'd give up the \$25,000 in a minute to get the book back, if that would end the matter; but he can't help seeing that he's at this chap's mercy, and can be bled again and again, so long as there's anything in here worth stealing. In short, his only hope is to get Mr. Thief behind the bars.

"And," Brady concluded with a significant shrug of the shoulders, "there isn't exactly what you might call a healthy chance of that."

"Why not?" questioned Ramsdell with his blandest, most vacuous expression. "Surely, two such experienced men as you, have hit upon some sort of working theory?"

They shook their heads.

"Nothing to it," growled Schmitz: "Every way you turn, you run up against a blank wall."

"Well," said the Columbia student modestly, "I, of course, am only an amateur, but one or two things seem reasonably plain to me. The person who stole the Wickliffe Bible knew the ins and outs of the place as well as Poe himself, and furthermore did not jimmy or force his way in after any cracksman fashion. He came through the door either with the old man's keys or some duplicate of them. Therefore, the scope of inquiry must be limited to a very few persons."

He paused for comment or objection, but as neither of the detectives made any reply, decided that he must have lit upon their own line of reasoning.

"We have already eliminated old man Poe from consideration," he went on. "How, then, about the valet?"

But Brady promptly negated this suggestion.

"Clean bill of health," he returned.

"Been with Poe for twenty years and shown himself absolutely trustworthy in every respect. Besides, it was a case of dog eat dog. If the old man

couldn't stir without the valet hearing him, neither could the valet stir without the old man being hep. Both of them slept like cats, with one eye open."

"What about other members of the household?" probed Ramsdell.

"There is only a cook and extra maid—Poe has no family or relatives, you see—and there is absolutely no ground for suspicion against either of them.

"Neither"—he anticipated the next inquiry—"were there any friends or associates who might have betrayed the old fellow's confidence. He comes about as near being a recluse as any one you ever heard of."

"In short, then," observed Ramsdell quietly, "the possibilities sift down practically to the librarian, eh?"

Both Brady and Schmitz gave a start of surprise.

"Who said anything about a librarian?" they demanded.

"Nobody, which is a little strange in view of the commissioner's instructions that I should be given all the facts. It leads me to believe that the librarian is the one you have picked for 'it.'"

The two detectives flushed guiltily under the accusing stare of the other's spectacles, but said nothing.

"Who is the girl, anyhow?"

Brady shot a quick, suspicious glance at him.

"How do you know the librarian is a girl at all?"

The amateur stepped over to a small desk beside the card-catalogue case and picked up a little vase holding a carnation, a popular novel, and a wisp of cambric handkerchief.

"Does that look like a man?" he asked derisively.

"Now," he continued, "what's the evidence against her?"

"Nothing," muttered Brady sulkily. "She's got a perfect alibi."

Ramsdell smiled a shade cynically.

"Come across with what you've got," he said. "Remember, McConnell promised I should have the entire dope sheet."

"Really, there is nothing against her," insisted Brady. "As I tell you, she can account for every minute of her time last night."

"Why do you suspect her, then?"

"Well," disclosed Brady reluctantly, "on the general principle that her alibi is just a shade too good. Then, too, her references are a bit open to question."

"Her references?"

"Yes. You see, old man Poe took her on without looking them up, and now it is impossible to do so."

"Why?"

"Because she gave as her last employer, Miss Ethel Vorhees of Riverside Drive, and Miss Vorhees has—"

He halted in confusion, realizing that he was on the edge of revealing a department secret.

"Miss Vorhees has disappeared," Ramsdell finished the sentence for him. "Ah, I begin to understand. But surely Miss Vorhees's family can settle the point?"

"That's just the rub. They say they never before heard of this librarian—she gives the name of Sylvia Felix—and deny that Miss Vorhees ever had a private secretary; yet they have to admit that the recommendation was either signed by Miss Vorhees, or else is a wonderfully clever forgery."

"What does the girl say about it?"

"Oh, she claims that the work she did for Miss Vorhees was of a private character—just what she refuses to tell—and was done at her boarding-house. It is only fair to say, too, that her landlady speaks of her having almost daily visits from a young lady closely answering Miss Vorhees's description."

"So?" Ramsdell reflectively stroked his chin. "And how about the previous record of this—Miss Felix?"

"Good, so far as we can trace it. She came from some little town down in Maryland about six months ago, with a letter to Miss Vorhees from a mutual friend in Baltimore, and she claims her only employment since her

arrival in New York has been with Miss Vorhees and here."

"Not exactly the training for so bold a job as this," smiled Ramsdell. "Still one can never tell. And now, if you don't mind, I think I should like to go over the place once more alone. There may be a point or two I failed to pick up on my first inspection."

"Go as far as you like," assented Brady carelessly, and, apparently leaving him free to his own devices, drew Schmitz aside for an earnest colloquy.

Both detectives, however, mindful of their chief's warning, took careful note of the stranger's every movement.

"Bet you what you dare," muttered Brady under his breath, "that 'four-eyes' yonder is the crook all right. This play of his is only a stall to give him the chance to pick up some clue he has overlooked or forgotten."

"Watch him!" Schmitz grabbed his companion by the arm. "What's he up to there? He acts like a pointer dog flushing a bunch of quail."

The simile was not a bad one. Ramsdell, pausing abruptly in his tour of the library, stood like a statue, his head thrust forward, staring as if fascinated toward the opposite wall.

Then suddenly he turned, and dashed at full speed down the length of the room, and out at the entrance toward the street.

"After him!" yelled Brady. "Don't let him get away. He's got what he came after!"

At the corner of the avenue they overhauled the fellow and brought him down in a struggling heap.

"Let me up, you fools!" he panted. "Don't you see I've got to send in an alarm for that fire?"

"What fire?" demanded Brady.

"Why, in that house down the street, No. 86, opposite the library."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FREAK OF A MADMAN.

INVOLUNTARILY Brady and Schmitz turned to look in the direction indi-

cated, and with a jerk Ramsdell broke loose from them and, springing to the fire-alarm box, sent in the signal.

Hardly had he done so, though, before the two brawny detectives had him once more firmly gripped on either side.

"You can't hand us any such steer as that, young fellow," mocked Brady. "I give you credit for trying to work a pretty smooth scheme, all right; but it don't go this time."

"What do you mean?" protested Ramsdell, struggling vigorously. "I'm trying to work no scheme. Come on down to 86, you boneheads, and let us see what we can do to put out the blaze."

Brady and Schmitz only laughed and took a tighter hold on his collar.

"Blaze?" they jeered. "You'll have to show us. Why, there isn't even a sniff of smoke in the air. No, no, son; you thought maybe that you could stir up a rumpus here and slip away in the excitement, but we're too old to fall for a game of that sort. What you'll do is march down to headquarters and offer a few explanations."

"You'd arrest me, eh? On what sort of a charge, I'd like to know?"

"What it'll be later I'm not prepared to say," grinned Brady. "But just now all we need is your sending in a false alarm."

"A false alarm!" cried Ramsdell hotly. "Oh, you idiot! You'll see how much of a false alarm it is unless you do something mighty quick. I tell you I saw the blaze starting with my own eyes. That's what made me sprint out of the library so fast."

Brady could only stare at him.

"Are you crazy?" he demanded. "Or what kind of a play are you trying to pull off? Saw something from the library, eh? With not a window in the place, and a granite wall three feet thick between you and the street? Why, you gook, if this spiel is on the level, the place for you is in the funny-house!"

While they were arguing, the clang

of approaching fire-engines had been sounding in all directions, for an alarm from such an important neighborhood drew all the apparatus in that section of the city; and now the first of the companies to arrive dashed up to the scene and halted.

"Where is it?" sharply questioned a helmeted captain, while his men, springing from their places on the truck, began hurriedly unpacking ladders and coupling up the hose.

"Down at No. 86!" shrilled back Ramsdell before the detectives could interpose. "It's a fire on the third floor!"

"Shut up, you!" Brady clapped a silencing hand over his mouth. Then he turned to the fireman.

"Don't bother to unreel your hose there, cap," he directed, throwing back the lapel of his coat to show his badge. "It's only a fluke this guy sent in before we could stop him. Whether he's a bug or not I can't quite say yet; but we're going to find out pretty shortly."

To the battalion chief who came whirling up a minute later he repeated the same statement; and the latter promptly got busy in despatching the different engines back to their quarters.

Just at this instant, though, the prisoner, managing to break loose from his captors, threw out an arm to point excitedly down the street.

"Look!" he cried. "Was I right about the fire or not?"

Following involuntarily with their gaze the direction of his outflung hand, the little group about him started back with varying expressions of surprise and consternation.

From the eaves of No. 86, an old-fashioned brown-stone boarding-house down the cross street opposite the granite library, shone a dull red glow, and even as they looked thin clouds of smoke began curling up all along the cornice.

"By Jove! it's a fire, all right," exclaimed the battalion chief; "and, what's more, it bids fair to be a nasty one!"

"You big boob!" He turned fiercely on Brady. "What did you mean by telling me there was nothing doing?"

It was not a moment, however, as he fully realized, to waste breath or time in recrimination. There was work to be done, and done in a hurry, too; for already the red glow had increased to a menacing glare; and before the battalion chief could recall the apparatus he had started away, flames were shooting from the upper windows.

The scene, shortly before so quiet, was quickly transformed into one of feverish activity. Above the staccato roar of the engines could be heard the hoarse bawling of orders as the fire captains, trumpets to lips, led on their men to the assault.

Across the street stretched lengths of hose like great, writhing serpents, and the hiss of the water as it met the blaze was intermingled with the din of the axes chopping a way to better points of vantage.

The police reserves came up on a run to stretch their lines and hold back the curious crowds.

Driven out by the advancing flames, the boarders at No. 86, and at the adjoining houses along the block, came hurrying down the steps, clutching to their breasts or dragging behind them clumsy bundles of such of their belongings as in their haste and panic they had elected to save.

Ramsdell, meantime, forgotten by everybody in the confusion, stood close to the battalion chief, watching the progress of the conflagration.

So engrossed was he with the spectacle, indeed, that, removing his peculiar, heavy-lensed glasses in order to polish them, he quite neglected to restore them to his nose, but continued to rub them absently, while he squinted at the fire with his colorless, near-sighted eyes.

He was brought abruptly out of his preoccupation, however, by a none too gentle push on the shoulder as an alert figure in business clothes and a slouch-hat, who had come racing up in a big

red car, forced his way through the crowd to the side of the battalion chief.

It was the famous head of the department — probably the greatest firefighter in history.

One experienced glance he cast at the burning building, then issued terse directions to his subordinate.

"Let No. 86 go," he said. "There's no chance of saving it, and everybody's out by this time, I suppose; so center all your work on Nos. 84 and 88."

The battalion chief was just about to turn to give the requisite orders when E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell, who had readjusted his glasses, sprang forward.

"No! No!" he interposed frenziedly. "You mustn't stop on 86 yet! There's a woman still inside who has got to be saved!"

"A woman?" Both the fire officials turned on him peremptorily. "Where is she?"

"In an inside room on the top floor. She is hemmed in both back and front by the flames, and there is no way for her to get to the roof!"

"I don't believe it!" blurted out the battalion chief. "The landlady herself told me that all her boarders were out of the house and accounted for."

"But she is wrong, I tell you!" insisted Ramsdell passionately. "Great Jehoshaphat! Can't I see the poor girl for myself, and the awful plight she is in?"

"See her?" The battalion chief's gaze searched the impenetrable wall of flame and smoke which swept the front of the top story. "Nutty," he muttered to his superior in a rapid aside.

Then, raising his trumpet, he began bellowing out directions calling back his men from the doomed No. 86.

Under his arm, quick as a flash, darted Ramsdell, and, evading a dozen hands stretched out to stop him, dashed up the stoop and into the open doorway of No. 84.

The next the watchers below saw of him he was on the roof of the building, an ax in his hand, snatched on his way up from an unsuspecting fireman, his

unimpressive form outlined against the red light.

He did not hesitate a second, but, hurling himself across the roof, vaulted the coping, and was lost to view in the murk of smoke and fire above No. 86. Though he was invisible, the watchers could plainly hear the blows of his ax as he chopped away at the burning roof.

"A lunatic, eh?" snapped the department head, clapping his hand down on the shoulder of the battalion chief. "Well, even so, we can't let him commit suicide. What are you about there, man? Get those two lines on 88 and the three on 84, playing across so as to make a water-curtain. Then send a couple of fellows in to grab him and drag him back.

"For Heaven's sake, don't be all day about it, though," he carped. "First thing we know that roof will go down on us, and then it will be good-bye to any hope of saving the fellow."

Then, nervously chewing the stump of cigar between his teeth, he watched impatiently while the maneuver he had counseled was effected.

It seemed to him as though he had never seen men slower at obeying an order; but at last the streams were playing, and a water-curtain formed before which the greedy flames hung back.

"Quick now!" he urged. "Get your men in there while they have a chance!"

The two picked as rescuers plunged into the narrow oasis of safety formed by the thin walls of water in the midst of that raging Hades.

Some one megaphoned down from the adjoining roof that they had descended into the hole chopped by the crazy man. Then for a space followed a period of tense waiting.

*Cra-ack!* An ominous sound broke upon the ears of the officers in the street, the significance of which was only too well known to both of them. The roof was about to give way.

The battalion chief's face went white, and he cursed softly under his breath.

"Two of the best men in my command!" he railed bitterly. "And sacrificed for the sake of a dope like that!"

"No, no! They are not sacrificed!" cried his superior, for he had caught the meaning of an excited movement among the men on the surrounding roofs. "They are not sacrificed! They—"

He paused, his heart leaping into his throat as a louder, more menacing crack sounded, followed by a thunderous roar.

Into the seething furnace below went the entire roof of No. 86, carrying with it a great section of the front wall, and up from the havoc soared a pillar of sparks and flame visible for miles.

For a moment the intense glare blinded the eyes of those looking on; then, as the first fierce light died down under the onslaught of a flood of water, the crowd on the opposite sidewalk raised a tumultuous cheer.

Through the drifting clouds of smoke the firemen on the roof of No. 84 could be seen carrying back from the heat and supporting to the scuttle the figures of the exhausted comrades.

The battalion chief and his companion hurried anxiously forward to the stoop to meet the little party. Could it be possible that all had been saved—the crazy man and his two rescuers as well?

They had not long to wait for the assurance. Out of the doorway emerged first, drenched and singed—but with his eye-glasses gleaming triumphantly—E. Bolingbroke Ramsdell; second, the two "smoke-eaters" who had gone so heroically to his assistance; and then—the incredulous officials were hardly able to believe their own eyes—the figure of a young woman.

The battalion chief staggered under the force of a tremendous thump on the back.

"Who's loony now?" The head of the department shouted in the exuberance of his relief and amazement. "Who's loony now?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### WIZARD OR CROOK?

THE following morning Ramsdell, a trifle shy in the matter of eyebrows, and with various points of his anatomy more or less bandaged, rode down from his modest lodgings on Morning-side Heights in a big red automobile.

It was the police commissioner's own private car which had been sent up to convey him to headquarters, and when he arrived at the great gray building he found no difficulty this time in securing an audience with its presiding genius.

Indeed, McConnell was eagerly awaiting him, and lost no time in pressing on him the box of big, black cigars.

The student, however, despite the flattering cordiality of his reception, was just as diffident and deprecatory as ever. He seemed in nowise changed by the rather startling series of events through which he had passed the evening before.

McConnell studied him with a puzzled expression as he sat there awkwardly on one corner of his chair, his round, moonlike face as bland as a baby's, his eyes concealed behind the heavy convex glasses.

Finally the commissioner broke into a laugh.

"I pass," he said. "It's up to you, Ramsdell, to explain whether you are a wizard or a crook. The facts in the case will bear out either theory."

"I don't know what you mean," said Ramsdell a trifle uneasily.

"All right, then; let's run over the points. The fire at No. 86 last night broke out, as we have now learned, in an inside room on the third floor, catching from the too close proximity of a gas-jet to a piece of flimsy drapey. It spread thence to the story

above, and out toward the front of the house; but at the time it began, and for some time afterward, it could not possibly have been discerned from the street.

"Yet you, over in the library where there was no possible outlook, discovered the blaze before even the people in the house were aware of it, and rushed madly out to give the alarm.

"Not only that," continued McConnell, "but later you made the surprising discovery that a woman was still in the burning house, and succeeded in effecting her rescue, although everybody else was willing to swear that no living soul remained in the building. Certainly none of the other spectators of the fire dreamed it for an instant."

"Yes," assented Ramsdell quietly, "those are undoubtedly the facts. Now, what are your deductions?"

"Well"—the commissioner paused to light a fresh cigar—"most people would call it magic, and give you credit for all sorts of occult powers. I think that's about the way the fire department—from top to bottom—has got you sized up. But over here on Centre Street we're pretty much from Missouri. We've seen so many wonder-workers come and go, and most of them, we remember, ended up with a little trip to Sing Sing."

"You think, then, that what I did last night was a set-up job?"

"I don't say so. I merely suggest that it might have been. Your discovery of the fire, for instance, could easily have been managed, if it had been prearranged that at a certain definite time some one was to slip into that inside room at the boarding-house, and shove the gas-jet into the drapery."

"True," assented Ramsdell with a touch of sarcasm; "and I suppose you think it could have been equally prearranged that the young lady was to remain quietly in that Gehenna, so that I could spring another coup by rescuing her?"

"That might have been an oversight," retorted McConnell. "Perhaps

you delayed a trifle longer than you intended?"

"And the motive for all this?"

"Ah, the motive!" McConnell frowned. "There, you've got me. Still any one who has had extensive dealings with criminals knows that an adequate motive is often the hardest thing to find."

The student considered the proposition thoughtfully, as though it were an abstract question, in no way affecting him; then he slowly shook his head.

"Too far-fetched a theory, commissioner," he announced. "It would argue that the young woman and I must have been confederates."

"And why not?" questioned McConnell. "You were at least old acquaintances."

"Old acquaintances?" The quick surprise of Ramsdell's protest was an admirable piece of acting if feigned. "Why, I never saw the girl before in all my life."

"You did not recognize her then last night?"

"Certainly not."

"Nor learn her name?"

"Up in the fire was hardly a place to wait for introductions," observed Ramsdell dryly; "and afterward they hustled me off to the hospital so quick that I had no opportunity of seeing her."

"Yet one would have expected you to know each other, since she is an old fellow townswoman of yours."

"An old fellow townswoman?"

"Yes; from Tenallytown, Maryland. She is Sylvia Felix, Mr. Poe's librarian."

"So?" The information did not appear especially to interest him. "We have both probably changed a good deal since I saw her last. I have not been to Tenallytown in several years."

The commissioner fell silent for a space, meditatively puffing at his cigar.

"Don't you think it a little strange," he queried at length, "that you should not have taken the trouble even to inquire the name of the girl whose life

you had saved, or ask any questions in regard to her?"

"Oh, I don't know," rejoined Ramsdell carelessly. "I could see that she hadn't sustained any damage to speak of, so what was the use of asking about her? Some fellows would have followed up the affair, I suppose; but then I'm not what would be called a lady's man."

"I think, Mr. Commissioner," he concluded, "you'll have a hard time trying to trace up any connection between me and that young woman, or any other young woman."

"You absolutely repudiate the suggestion then," queried McConnell with his teasing smile, "that your remarkable performance of last night was the clever trickery of a crook?"

Ramsdell merely looked his contempt.

"The theory hasn't a leg to stand on," he said.

"You set up as a wizard, eh?"

"No, I am simply an unofficial attaché of the police department."

"And what explanation has the unofficial attaché of the police department to offer for the mystery?"

"None."

"That is another of his little secrets, I suppose?"

Ramsdell nodded.

"And now, Mr. Commissioner," he said, rising, "if you've nothing further to ask me, I guess I'd better be getting down to business. Do you still want me to work on the Poe case?"

"Why not? You haven't cleared it up yet, have you?"

"No; but if Brady's theory is correct, and Miss Felix stole the Wickliffe Bible, it would be a waste of time to search further for the book. It must have been destroyed with the rest of her belongings in last night's fire."

"What do you think?"

"Well, with all due respect to Brady, I believe I had better continue my investigations."

McConnell did not seem dissatisfied with the decision.



"It's your problem," he said. "Handle it any way you choose."

After the other had gone, though, he sat for a long while pondering with his chin in his hand.

"Wizard or crook?" he mused. "I'll take my oath he's a crook; but what the game is, or what he's up to, I'm blessed if I can make out."

## CHAPTER VII.

### ON A NEW TACK.

RAMSDELL had scoffed at Brady's theory that Miss Felix was the thief of the Wickliffe Bible. He had betrayed not the slightest interest in her during his talk with the commissioner.

Yet, strangely enough, the one idea in his head when he left the police department was to see and obtain speech with her.

Realizing that he would almost inevitably be shadowed on leaving the commissioner's office, he circled around half a dozen blocks or so, hopped on and off surface cars, Subway, and Elevated trains, and dived in and out of office-buildings, until after about half an hour of this sort of thing he was satisfied that he had shaken off any possible pursuit.

Then he directed his steps toward the block where the fire had occurred the night before.

No. 86 was, of course, a mere heap of smoldering ruins, and he had no idea to what new address the young woman had betaken herself, having feared to ask the commissioner, lest he should betray his intentions. But, since the street along here was a row of boarding-houses, he had a pretty shrewd suspicion that she had not moved far from her former location.

Even that, however, most people would not have considered much of a clue. He could not very well go along from door to door, ringing bells, and inquiring for the object of his search without soon having police headquarters acquainted with his actions. Be-

sides, such a task bade fair to be endless.

Ramsdell appeared not a whit perturbed, though, at the difficulties in his path.

Slowly he strolled down the side of the block opposite the burned No. 86, past the long, granite stretch of the library, and back again, peering at the numbers across the way.

Finally, with every air of confidence, he crossed the street to No. 92, mounted the stoop, and rang the bell.

Then, when the maid appeared in response, he boldly presented his card, and asked to see Miss Felix.

The result showed that he had made no mistake.

The maid, although she gazed at him in haughty rebuff, did not deny the presence of the young lady in the house.

"Are you another of them reporters?" she inquired loftily. "Well, Miss Felix is lying down, and said she wasn't to be disturbed for nobody."

Defly Ramsdell interposed his foot so as to prevent the door being shut in his face.

"I think Miss Felix will possibly make an exception of me," he said pleasantly. "Tell her it is not a newspaperman, but the gentleman who was able to be of service to her at last night's fire."

Instantly the girl's manner changed. The papers that morning had made a good deal of Ramsdell's feat, and her opportunities had been few for beholding a real hero, and speaking to him face to face.

"Oh, sir!" She flung wide the door with trembling eagerness. "Excuse me, sir. I'm sure Miss Felix will see you. Walk right into the parlor, sir, and I'll run up and tell her you are here."

The prediction proved to be correct, for almost immediately the heroine of the previous night's adventure came fluttering down the stairs.

"Mr. Ramsdell?" she questioned, a trifle uncertainly, for like most boarding-house parlors the room was dark.

Then, as he bowed, she came quickly forward, and clasped him by the hand.

"I don't know how I can ever thank you, Mr. Ramsdell, for—"

"Don't try," he interrupted. "In fact, I'd much rather you wouldn't; for to tell the truth, I have gained this interview with you under somewhat false pretenses."

She stiffened perceptibly. "You mean that you are not—"

"No, no!" He waved his hand as if to dispel her doubts. "I am the man who was fortunately able to be of some assistance in your predicament."

"Of course you are," she hastened to interpose. "Forgive me if I wavered for a moment in my recognition; but there was so much confusion last night, and so many people crowding about, that surely I am not to be blamed. Besides, you must admit that you spoke rather peculiarly just now. What did you mean by saying that you were here under false pretenses, Mr. Ramsdell?"

"Well, you would naturally regard this as a social visit, wouldn't you—a friendly call to inquire after your health and exchange the usual amenities over our recent experience? It doesn't happen, however, to be anything of the kind. I am here as an emissary of the police."

"An emissary of the police!" Unless he was greatly mistaken a quick light of apprehension flashed into the girl's eye, and she had to bite her lips to restrain a sudden gasp of dismay.

"Yes," he said; "I am working on the Poe Bible case."

Her relief was apparent.

"Oh!" she murmured. "That? Why, I have already told the detectives all I know, Mr. Ramsdell; but if it will help you in any way I shall be glad to go over the points again."

"Thank you," he rejoined. "That is just exactly what I do want. It is always more satisfactory to get one's evidence at first hand."

Accordingly, she obligingly rehearsed for his benefit the details he had

already gathered from Brady relative to her employment by old Poe, together with such knowledge as she possessed concerning the purchase of the Wickliffe Bible, and its subsequent disappearance.

"Now, let's get this absolutely straight," he said, when she had finished. "You say, that on the night of the theft, you remained at the library with Mr. Poe until he closed up the place and took his departure?"

"Yes; he asked me to stay and finish up the cataloguing of a new lot of books which had just come in."

"You are sure that he put the Bible in the safe before he left?"

"Absolutely so; and also that he securely locked the safe. In fact, I am ready at any time to make oath regarding those two things."

"Then you went out of the library together, eh, and he locked the door behind you?"

Again she nodded acquiescence.

"And that is all you know, except that when you arrived the next morning you found the old man beside the open safe, bemoaning his loss of the Bible?"

"That is positively all, Mr. Ramsdell. I am sorry, for your sake, that it is not more—that is, if you hope to gain anything by the clearing up of this mystery."

"Oh, spare yourself any regrets on my account," he smiled; "I have got all that I expected."

"Then you are satisfied with the little I was able to tell you about the affair?"

"Oh, no." He shook his head. "Far from it."

She looked at him in puzzled fashion, as though not quite certain how to take his strange remark.

"How could you expect me to be satisfied"—he paused—"when I am received as a perfect stranger by my own cousin, Sylvia Felix, of Tenallytown?"

She reeled back and caught at the arm of a chair for support, her cheek

grown white, her eyes wide with consternation.

"Your cousin?" she gasped.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WITH MASKS OFF.

For a moment there was silence in the room. Then the girl lifted a face become suddenly drawn and haggard.

"You know," she faltered, "who I am?"

"I can guess," he answered. "True, you are wearing a wig, and you have done something—I don't know just what—to your eyebrows; but any man who had once seen your photograph ought to have been able to place you. Even Brady and Schmitz, slow as they are, ought to have—"

But she evidently was not listening.

"Oh, you are cruel, you are dastardly," she broke out, "to have tracked me down thus, and tricked me by playing on my sense of gratitude. No wonder that you said you came here under false pretenses.

"But you have not got me yet!" she exclaimed fiercely. "I will never go back, I tell you! There is surely an asylum somewhere for such an unhappy girl as I!"

As she spoke she sprang toward the door, and in another moment would have been out of the house and flying down the street. But quick as she was, Ramsdell was quicker. When she reached the door, he was there ahead of her, with his back to it, in full control of the situation.

"Hold on, now," he counseled in his thin, schoolmaster voice. "Don't do anything rash. Before we go any farther, suppose you run up-stairs and ask Cousin Sylvia just what sort of a fellow I am. She will tell you whether or not I am the cad and cur you so evidently believe me."

The girl flashed him a quick look of startled surprise.

"Your Cousin Sylvia? She is not here," she attempted to deny.

"Come, come," he scoffed; "no fibbing. You and I both know that at this minute she is sitting up in your second-floor hall-bedroom."

She hesitated a second or two longer; then overcome by feminine curiosity, admitted that he was right.

"But how did you ever guess it?" she demanded. "Are you Mephistopheles himself, that you know everything? Why, Sylvia only came to town a half-hour ago in response to an urgent telephone call from me, and she was so disguised that I, myself, wouldn't have recognized her if I had not been expecting her."

Ramsdell, however, parried her eager questions.

"It doesn't matter so much how I know that she is here," he said, "as that I do know it. And since the most important thing now is to look out for your interests, I suggest that instead of wasting time in talk, you run up and bring her down, so that we can all three discuss the situation intelligently.

"You may not know it, my dear young lady," he added, speaking more gravely, "but you are in rather serious danger."

"In serious danger?" The color which had partially returned to her cheek fled once more. "You mean that some one besides yourself knows of my whereabouts?"

"No, that is not it. I did not intend to tell you when I came here, but I have decided now it is better that you should be warned. The truth is that you are apt to be arrested at almost any time."

"Apt to be arrested?" She stared at him. "For what, pray?"

"On a charge of stealing old man Poe's \$75,000 Bible."

"But that is absurd," she protested. "Why, there's not a grain of evidence against me."

"That don't make any difference. The theory of the detectives is that you are the one person open to suspicion, and they may take a chance on arresting you in the hope of forcing a confession. In fact, I have an idea they

would have done so before this, if I hadn't happened along and confused them by crossing the trail. Now, they are uncertain whether the real culprit is you or I; but the danger still remains from the fact that McConnell has got an idea in his head we may be confederates, and he might order the arrest of both of us."

"But I can't be arrested," cried the girl desperately. "It would spoil everything."

"Of course it would," he assented; "and it is just to avoid such a catastrophe that I want to discuss things now with you and Cousin Sylvia. So run up and get her, and let us waste no more time in getting down to business."

Accepting him now with implicit confidence, she hurried off, and a few moments later returned accompanied by a funny figure of a little old lady shrouded in a cavernous bonnet and a shawl; but who, on putting back her long crape veil, revealed the rather youthful features of Cousin Sylvia.

"Why, 'Broke' Ramsdell!" she exclaimed as she caught sight of her relative. "The idea of you setting up as a detective!"

Then she fluttered across the room to bestow on him an affectionate kiss.

"You see," said Ramsdell, with a glance over her shoulder toward the other girl. "That is what I meant when I said you didn't accord me the sort of a welcome I was accustomed to expect from Cousin Sylvia."

And he didn't even have the grace to blush, although the red dyed the girl's face from brow to chin.

Verily, Ramsdell was progressing fast for one who had so shortly before disavowed to McConnell that he was a lady's man.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "WHY GIRLS LEAVE HOME."

AT no time in all his twenty-six years of life could E. Bolingbroke

Ramsdell have been described as a very susceptible person; yet it is certain that now as he saw that embarrassed blush dye the face of the fair charmer across the room, he was seized with a sudden peculiar palpitation of the heart, while an unfamiliar tremor coursed through his veins like an electric flash.

Comparing her looks, too, with those of his not uncomely Cousin Sylvia, he was struck with contempt for the subterfuge which had endeavored to pass off one for the other. As well expect a goddess to fill the rôle of mere mortality. Any one with half an eye ought to have recognized that this divine creature was not a product of Tenallytown, Maryland.

However, being by nature of a rather practical turn, he did not permit these mental rhapsodies to interfere with the actual business in hand.

Hurriedly placing three chairs in convenient juxtaposition, and motioning the ladies to be seated, he began.

"Now," Miss Vorhees—"he, started, only to be silenced by an imperative "S-h! S-h!" from his companions.

"For Heaven's sake, don't use that name!" cried the owner of it nervously. "In a place like this, where the servants, not to speak of the other boarders, are eavesdropping constantly, one cannot be too careful."

"Oh, there isn't the slightest danger," he assured them, glancing around meditatively. "The maid who let me in is cleaning up a room on the top floor. Another maid is tidying up the dining-room. The cook and laundress are gossiping with the furnace man at the area door. The landlady is busy at her linen closet, and all the boarders who are not out of the house, are safe in their rooms."

The calm conviction of his statement impressed the two women in spite of themselves.

"How can you possibly know all that?" they demanded skeptically.

"Second sight," he informed them coolly. "It is an art in which I have made quite a little progress; and if we

had time, I should ask you to see if my assertions were not absolutely correct. As it is, however, you will have to take my word for the situation; for time presses.

"So now, Miss Vorhees," reverting to his original inquiry—"let me have the facts, please, relative to your departure from home. The police merely know that you disappeared some three or four weeks ago without apparent cause, and have consequently been working on the theory of an abduction."

This was surely a straight enough question, but the girl was so diffident and reserved in her replies that it required several more interrogatories and a good deal of prompting from Miss Felix before the facts finally came to light.

Boiled down, however, and freed from all extraneous matter, the story appeared to be in its essential elements the old one of two parents trying to force their child into an uncongenial marriage.

There was a young architect and builder named Glenn McKeon it seemed whom the father and mother had set their hearts upon as a son-in-law.

The daughter had resolutely protested against the match, and had sought in every way to flout and discourage the young man; but McKeon was a persistent suitor, and despite her struggles, she saw herself being steadily forced under the stress of parental influence toward the altar.

Then in her desperation the idea had struck her that she might achieve independence by writing a novel. That was the secret of her association with Sylvia Felix, for, casting about to obtain a good typist and secretary, some one had recommended the Tenallytown girl, and their purely business relations at the start soon ripened into those of confidence and friendship.

For months the millionaire's daughter labored over her literary task, going secretly every day to Cousin Sylvia's humble lodgings to revise, and

amend, and polish what she had already written, until at last the novel was finished.

But, alas, the success on which its author had so glowingly bargained, failed to come. No publisher could be found even to consider it; their readers without a dissenting voice proclaimed it hopeless. There seemed nothing left for Ethel but to yield to her parents' desires and accept McKeon.

At this juncture, though, it happened that Miss Felix had the choice of two positions open to her, one as secretary to a gouty old widower up at New Rochelle, and the other as librarian to Darius Poe.

Considerations of salary prompting her to take up with the out-of-town offer, the bright suggestion came that her friend might find surcease from her pressing difficulties, and possibly work out a solution to them by accepting in her place the job with the old book-lover.

No other cause existed for Ethel's leaving home, both girls averred, save McKeon alone. Except on this one point, her father and mother were indulgent to her every whim, and she was devotedly attached to them. Indeed, she confessed, that it had almost broken her heart not to be able to send them some message to relieve their anxiety.

Yet she had feared to do so, lest it might lead in some way to her being taken back and forced to marry McKeon; and that was something, she tearfully protested, that she would not, could not, and should not do.

"McKeon? McKeon?" muttered Ramsdell thoughtfully, when the diffuse recital was finally ended. "Where have I heard that fellow's name, or seen some of his work?"

"You wouldn't have to look very far for the latter," broke in Miss Vorhees. "All you have to do is turn to the window behind you, for he built that ugly old library across the street."

"What?" Ramsdell sprang to his feet

in excitement. "Are you sure? I was planning to go down to the building department this very afternoon to find out who had been responsible for it.

"What's more, Miss Vorhees"—a flush of elation spread over his usually expressionless face—"you needn't bother your head another moment over those troubles of yours. You are going to be safe back home inside of a couple of days, and it won't be to marry McKeon, either—not by a jugful. Take it from me, he will never annoy you again."

"What do you mean? How do you know?" demanded the two girls in chorus; and Sylvia added:

"Why Broke, are you crazy? What possible connection can there be between McKeon's having built the Poe library and his courtship of Ethel?"

He was about to answer, but halted abruptly, and with a quizzical smile, laid a warning finger to his lips.

"Hush!" he whispered. "The landlady is creeping up to listen at the keyhole; so it's no use to try talking any longer. To-morrow I will call, though, and report developments. In the meantime, watch me give Mrs. Polly Pry the surprise of her life."

As he finished speaking, he caught up his hat and made a sudden dash for the parlor door, flinging it open and bolting through it toward the front entrance so fast that the fat landlady, who had just taken up a convenient position outside, had no time to retreat, but was caught *in flagrante delicto*.

Never stopping to listen to her stammering excuses, Ramsdell passed on out at the door; but the incident had evidently distracted him from his usual keen vigilance, for he quite failed to notice a figure lurking on the next stoop who glanced up quickly at his exit.

If he overlooked this one feature of the situation, however, there were not many things which escaped the observation of his spectacled vision.

As he was descending the boarding-

house stoop, a big blue touring car went whizzing past driven by a young man with a handsome, rather reckless face.

Ramsdell cast a careless glance toward it; then halted abruptly and stood staring after the automobile, almost statue-like in his absorption.

Only a second did this inactivity last, though. The next instant he was down the steps, and racing at top speed toward a taxicab standing on the corner.

"Follow that automobile!" he panted to the chauffeur as he flung himself inside. "Don't let it get away at any hazard. See, it is turning the next corner now. You will have to make speed, or you will lose it sure!"

But the chase was destined never to be taken.

A long arm was thrust into the cab just then, and, seizing Ramsdell by the collar, jerked him out to the sidewalk.

"Oh, no, you don't!" It was the voice of Detective Brady pitched to a key of triumph. "No getaway like that for yours, young fellow. You'll come down with me, and have a talk with the commissioner. He told me to shadow you; but, Lord, I never thought I'd have the luck to run you into a hole first dash out of the box."

"And what sort of a hole do you think you have run me into, Brady?" inquired Ramsdell politely. It was a peculiarity of his that anger always induced in him a courtesy almost Chesterfieldian in its character.

"What sort of a hole?" sneered Brady. "Why, haven't I got the goods now to prove what the old man's been hinting at right along—that you and this Felix girl were in on the game together?"

Ramsdell laid his hand to his heart and bowed like a dancing master.

"Brady," he said, "I pay you my respects. You will pardon the ineligance of my language, but you are the nearest approach to a hunk of cheese of any human being I know."

Then, in spite of himself, he began

to laugh at the very absurdity of the situation.

"Why, you big slob," he cried, "do you know what was in that automobile you prevented me from overtaking? No, of course you don't, and you never could guess; so I shall have to tell you. It was Darius Poe's seventy-five-thousand-dollar Bible!"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CROWNING TRAGEDY.

OF course the mere satisfaction of expressing his sentiments was all that Ramsdell got out of vituperating the detective. He had to go down to headquarters with Brady just the same, and on his arrival there he was put through one of McConnell's most grilling examinations.

The upshot of the whole matter was that he was accorded two more days of grace in which to make good. If he didn't turn in some information by that time which pointed to a solution of the Bible case, both he and the supposititious Miss Felix were to be arrested.

"But you haven't got anything against either of us," protested Ramsdell.

"Oh, yes, I have," grimly replied McConnell, that shrewd reader of men. "I can see that you're very anxious not to have this girl pinched, and it isn't altogether chivalry that's prompting you in the matter. There's something in the background there that you don't want to come out; so I have a very strong suspicion that if I get her down here and put her over the hurdles I shall have all I need against both of you.

"Nevertheless," he went on, "just to be a good sport, and because you've shown yourself such a nervy cuss, I am going to give you a chance to prove yourself on the level. Mind you, I don't think you are for a single minute, and I'm not going to loosen up the clamps too far; but it'll be a chance just the same.

"You shall have two days to clear up this case you were so eager to take on; but naturally I intend to have you watched all the time, and if you try to make a sneak you will be nabbed at once. Then, when the two days are up, if you can't bring forward the guilty party, or give me a straight line on him, it's behind the bars for both you and the dame. Now, go to it."

Ramsdell nodded blithely and went out.

"Two days!" he thought to himself. Why, all he needed was two hours. He already had all the threads for a solution of the mystery in his hands. The only thing required was to draw them in.

And first, with Ethel Vorhees's difficulties more in mind than his own, he decided to look up Mr. Glenn McKeon.

The architect, he learned without much trouble, had an office on Twenty-Third Street, and bachelor-apartments in a Broadway hotel; but to his chagrin he discovered, on inquiry, that McKeon was not to be found at either place; and at the hotel the pleasing information was added that the young man had left town and expected to be gone for a week or ten days. This seemed to put a pretty effectual check on the promise Ramsdell had made to Ethel, that she should return home within forty-eight hours; and he began to wonder if all his plans were to meet the same adverse fate.

Certainly it shortly appeared as though such would be the case. With infinite pains he tracked up the touring-car which had escaped him through Brady's interference; for he had been quick-witted enough to memorize its number as it whirled away from him. Finally he located it in a garage on Columbus Avenue, and wheedling the proprietor of the place into giving him a job, worked like a nailer for two solid hours cleaning the mud-splattered and dust-begrimed cars which came in.

At last, though, he got the chance

to investigate the big touring-car, and, under pretense of cleaning it, ransacked it thoroughly from carbureter to cushions.

But it was only to make a water-haul. The Bible, if it had ever been there, was certainly not so any longer.

So it was with every move he attempted. His most promising prospects came to naught; his best clues led him nowhere. Hard luck persistently dogged his footsteps and failure grinned threateningly ahead.

Still he gave no hint to Ethel of how ticklish their situation had become. He made excuse to see her several times in those two fateful days; but to her he spoke only in glittering generalities, and painted their situation in roseate colors.

And so at last the brief forty-eight hours allowed him rolled around, with nothing accomplished.

On the same principle that a good meal is always given to a condemned man just before his execution, he had spent the closing evening of his scant shrift with Ethel; and now, with the time fully up, set forth about eleven o'clock to report himself to McConnell, determined to ask no mercy for himself, but to use every persuasive plea in his power on behalf of the girl.

As he came down the steps of the boarding-house, however, and turned gloomily toward the corner to take a car for headquarters, he halted suddenly with that peculiar stiffening of the body which Brady had likened to the pointing of a dog.

Another moment and he was hurrying to the nearest telephone-booth, where he demanded "1300 Spring" with such feverish intensity that the girls at Central were sure nothing less than a wholesale riot or murder was in progress.

In communication with police headquarters at last, he gave no one any peace until he gained the ear of the commissioner.

To such good purpose did he talk,

however, that a few moments later McConnell's automobile came dashing up, loaded down with a bunch of burly detectives.

"Now, what is it you say," demanded the commissioner, leaping out over the wheel before the machine came fully to a stop—"that you have the thief cornered in the library right now?"

Ramsdell nodded exultantly.

"He's come back to make another haul in the effort to force the old man to a settlement," he said. "Right now he's at the safe, picking out the books he thinks will best serve his purpose."

McConnell gave an impatient toss of the head.

"Look here," he growled, "this is going a bit too far. You may know that the fellow is in there all right, and what his object is; but when you try to tell me what he is doing at any particular moment you are nothing more nor less than a liar."

"All right," laughed Ramsdell indifferently; "have it your own way. Have it any old way, so long as you catch this scamp for me; only don't waste any more time in argument."

"I guess the best way to do," he counseled, "is for you to send about four of your men around to the front, and tell them to wake up Poe and make him take them into the library. Then you and the others will stand here."

"Oh, we stand here, do we?" questioned McConnell suspiciously. "What for, please?"

"Why, to catch him when he comes out."

McConnell cast his eye along the grim, impregnable front of the building.

"To catch him when he comes out!" he repeated with disdain. "And where do you stand, young man?"

"Right here with you."

"All right, then, I'll do as you say. But I tell you to your face that I have no confidence in you, and that I think this is a stall; and I warn you that if I see the least indication of funny



business on your part I'll jerk you down to headquarters so fast that it'll make your head swim." -

Ramsdell made no answer. In fact, there was nothing to say. Results, not words, were what he must pin his faith to now; and for the results he could only wait and hope.

So the little group stood there on the sidewalk, McConnell grumbling under his breath, the detectives yawning and supercilious, Ramsdell tense and taut as a coil of wire spring.

The slow minutes passed so monotonously that the commissioner at last started to broach the sneering query if this was an all-night job; but just then the student gave a low hiss for silence, and, motioning energetically with his hand, waved the drawn-up forces to right and left.

Dramatically he pointed with his finger as McConnell and his men beheld what seemed to them a veritable miracle; for slowly and noiselessly one of the great granite foundation blocks of the building began to revolve as on a pivot.

Farther and farther it moved, wider and wider opened the aperture, until at last the crouching figure of a man sprang through, and, straightening up, revealed the handsome, reckless face of the fellow Ramsdell had seen in the touring-car.

McConnell recognized him also, and recoiled with a start.

"By all the powers," he exclaimed incredulously, "if it isn't Glenn McKeon!"

The trapped criminal noted this momentary stupefaction on the part of the commissioner, and took advantage of it.

With a snarl of defiance he turned and sprang like a startled deer into full run, desperation lending him wings.

But Ramsdell was not going to let him escape so easily as that, after all the suffering and annoyance he had caused Ethel.

Like a contest between a rabbit and a greyhound was the chase, but the

shorter pair of legs won; and before the corner was reached Ramsdell had the satisfaction of clutching his lengthy opponent about the waist and bringing him to a halt.

McKeon turned and struck out viciously, but before more than one blow landed McConnell and his cohorts had come up, and the battle was over.

That one blow had been enough, though.

"Did he hurt you?" asked McConnell, observing how rueful looked the hero of the occasion.

"No; his lick only grazed my temple. But" — Ramsdell pointed sadly to the shattered fragments of glass on the sidewalk — "he broke my spectacles."

"Broke your spectacles? Why, you speak as though it was a tragedy. You can get another pair, can't you?"

Ramsdell shook his head more lugubriously than ever.

"Not like this pair," he said.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HIS LITTLE SECRET.

SELDOM had there been a more important arrest in the city, or one arousing more comment and sensation, than that of Glenn McKeon; for the most dangerous criminal is always the one of education and intelligence who prostitutes his talents and ability to base and sordid ends.

It was discovered on investigation that McKeon in the practise of his profession had arranged in many of the buildings constructed by him secret entrances similar to the one in the Poe library, the existence of which was known only to himself.

The object was undoubtedly to permit him to enter and loot at will the establishments occupying these structures; and through his arrest many hitherto seemingly inexplicable burglaries were brought to light, and one or two innocent men released from prison.

"It's certainly been a big card for me," confessed McConnell one day about a month later when Ramsdell happened to be calling on him, "although I never have felt exactly right about taking the credit which rightly belonged to you."

"I got the cash," laughed Ramsdell, "which was all I wanted. You're perfectly welcome, commissioner, to all the credit that's going."

"And you absolutely refuse to do any more work for the department?" urged McConnell. "I'll make it well worth your while."

But Ramsdell only shook his head. "Couldn't think of it, commissioner. I only went into the thing to get money for scientific research, you know; and I am having all the research I want now since I have taken my new position with the Vorhees Optical Company."

He hesitated a second, and then indulged in a rare burst of confidence.

"Besides, commissioner," he went on, "I might as well tell you that I would no longer be worth my salt to you. My spectacles are broken."

"Your spectacles? What had your spectacles to do with your success as a detective?"

"Everything. You accused me jokingly of working magic once or twice, commissioner; but you were nearer the truth than you imagined. It was magic that I was working, scientific magic; for to those spectacles even the most solid substances were as transparent as glass. I could see into the interiors of buildings, down into the earth, right through a stone wall."

"You see," he elucidated, "by a

peculiar property of the glass they refracted light far beyond the ordinary range of human vision, and so—"

But McConnell was not interested just then in the scientific explanation.

"Great Heavens, man," he ejaculated, "you've got a wonderful thing in your hands there! Go right ahead and make some more of those spectacles."

"I can't."

"Can't?"

"No. The result was purely an accident which occurred in the course of another experiment. I don't know how it was obtained myself, and, as only enough of the glass was secured sufficient to make two small lenses, that single pair of spectacles was all that was ever made—perhaps all that ever will be made."

"And just to think," mused McConnell regretfully. "They were never used on but one case."

"No; on two," corrected Ramsdell. "They were also of big service in the Vorhees matter."

"Ah! So you were back of that girl's returning home, eh? I always suspected there was more to be told than the family gave out. Did you get a reward out of it?"

"No, I'm waiting for that. You see, commissioner, I'm hoping that some day I shall marry Miss Ethel."

After his visitor had gone the commissioner sat thinking.

"Well," he said, "that guy is certainly taking no prizes in a beauty show, and he isn't much bigger than a minute, and he's got a voice like a girl; but at that I'm betting he wins out. He sure has a way of getting what he wants."

THE END.

## A DISTINCTION.

FAME's very sweet, yet we should careful be  
That it is fame, not notoriety;  
'Tis satisfaction small, none can deny,  
To be a cinder in the public eye!

*Carlyle Smith.*

# A Steam-room Fracas



by Hartridge D. Tyler

**B**Y Jove! such preoccupation, Keller. What have you there—a glowworm or a bit of radium?"

Sardonis Tillinghast, stopping beside a big leather chair in the Van Rensselaer Club lounge, gazing down at the slump-shouldered youth in it, who held something half under one palm and was looking at it covertly.

Keller flushed and glanced up, dropping the object into an outside coat-pocket. His face cooled in an instant, he smiled, and replied languidly: "What would you say to it being an engagement ring?"

"Of all things, Keller! You! you of the tender heart and callous conscience, a benedict! Benedicts must leave off Benedictine, you know—and absinth!"

"Oh, but she has me by the pledge—"

"Like holding a squirming boy by the ear, eh?"

"No, really, I don't mind it so much, you know; one can still get brandy sauce on pudding, and there's coffee, and those drugged soft drinks at the soda-fountains."

"To be sure. Good for you! So you're really engaged!" Tillinghast was leaning forward with a warm smile and a congratulatory hand thrust out, as though to extend his deepest sympathy.

"Oh, I didn't say that, you know,"

the other corrected hastily. "I said what if it were an engagement ring? But have you a cigarette? This thinking of serious things has quite fagged me."

Tillinghast slipped a smooth, shapely little cigarette-case from his outside pocket and tossed it to Keller.

"Look! Isn't it an extra that news-boy is shouting!" cried the latter, pointing through the bay window. "I wonder what's happened!"

Tillinghast, who doted on "Extras" and fairly lived on the "Personal" columns, sent a page out to buy the copy; but it proved an unexciting political *exposé* and Tillinghast threw the paper down in disgust.

Keller picked it up and became apparently absorbed. Tillinghast stood silent a moment, a slow smile glowing on his lips and finally flaring from his eyes.

Keller frowned interestedly over the article and appeared to have wholly forgotten the other's presence.

Sardonis Tillinghast broke into a full smile, glanced around the room quickly to assure himself nobody was watching, and then gently plucked Keller's sleeve. Keller did not look up; he seemed utterly absorbed in his reading.

"I say!" exclaimed Tillinghast, jerking his friend's arm again. "I say, old man, do you know, you forgot to return my cigarette-case."

Keller glanced up bewilderedly and listened blankly to Tillinghast's repetition of the remark. Then he broke into a smile, felt in an inside pocket, brought out with a nervous gesture the little gold cigarette-box and dropped it into Tillinghast's palm with a laugh.

"I'm as absent-minded as though I were rich. Really, I never noticed it was yours at all; it's so like my own."

He seemed more serious than Tillinghast's laughing eyes demanded, even launching upon further explanation.

"Oh, that's all right, Kell. I'd rather have what you've got than the chronic D. T.'s," Tillinghast broke in upon him.

"But, I say, Till. I swear I thought the thing was my own."

"That's what the fellow over in Jefferson Market Court said the other day when the judge asked him why on earth he had picked up that lady's sealskin sack in a department store; but the judge wasn't as trusting as your friends, Kell—and even your enemies."

"Oh, confound you!" cried the other, jumping up irritably. "I didn't want your silly cigarette-case. I got a better one this morning; old Scroggins left it in the library."

Keller flashed the trinket before Tillinghast's amused eyes, flung the newspaper at him, and left the room.

Tillinghast, with a strange, forced laugh, stood looking after the fellow.

"Somebody ought to cure that boy; he'll be crunching along on the crust of crime—if he isn't already. Some of the chaps think it's funny. I suppose—oh, well, he's harmless—and so was the club dog till he went mad and bit three bell-hops."

Dropping down in the vacated chair he picked up the spreading leaves of newspaper, turning mechanically to the column marked "Personal." There was nothing of interest until he reached the "Business Personal" heading and there noted the announcement of a new Turkish bath.

Taking out a neat little note-book Tillinghast scrawled the address, mentally determining to try the place.

He followed down through the "Lost and Found" column with his usual precision. One prominent advertisement arrested his attention and he considered it thoughtfully for fully a minute.

The notice read:

LOST.—Probably in street on Fifth Avenue, between Thirty-Fourth and Seventy-Second, a five carat diamond, *rondelle* cut; unique alexanderite table-base. Engraved "A. K. K. to M. C. H. 9-14-10." Lost Saturday afternoon, September 14. Reward \$250.00. Return through Sterling, jeweler, Fifth Avenue.

"And it doesn't say 'no questions asked,'" mused Tillinghast. "Well, maybe I'm wrong; but those initials!"

He looked up quickly as Keller passed through the room on his way to the street. Tillinghast half rose, as if to stop him with a question. Then he squared his shoulders, gave a little toss to his head, thrust fists deep into his afternoon trousers, and stood staring out of the window as Keller walked down the club steps and hurried up the street, fumbling something with nervous fingers in his coat-pocket.

Going to a telephone booth, Tillinghast, secured a number and asked for Miss Hartworth.

"Hello, is this you, Miss Hartworth?" he asked. Being assured that it was, he continued: "Are you advertising through Sterling, the jeweler, for the return of a diamond ring?"

"Yes," was the low reply. "But it is confidential, Mr. Tillinghast. I have reasons for not wanting by name connected with the ring."

"I understand. You lost it from a taxi on Fifth Avenue, didn't you? Were you riding alone?"

"No, Mr. Keller was with me. Do you think you know something about it? Oh, I'm so anxious to recover it as soon—oh, as soon as possible. Every minute counts."

"I may be able to get hold of it. But if I do you'll understand there's no question of reward and you're not to ask anything about the affair. You're to struggle with woman's fatal curiosity, you know—or is it *fatal* woman's—"

"All I want is the ring," she declared tensely.

"I'll do my best. Good-by, Miss Hartworth," and Tillinghast, bowing profoundly to the mouthpiece, hung up the receiver.

By chance in the billiard-room he ran across a cousin of Keller's, an older man, a club bachelor and quite a pompous person.

"Do you know," said Tillinghast, in course of conversation, "I think young Keller ought to be jacked up by somebody. He'll be getting into trouble with that eccentricity of his."

"What splendid nonsense!" laughed the cousin. "It's delicious! Why, my boy, nobody knows it outside of the club, and he furnishes such a lot of amusement. Old Scroggins was just telling of how he missed his cigarette-case this morning and immediately went to hunt up the boy. Found him just now; he returned the cigarette-case gladly, saying he had already tired of it."

"What's the point to that?"

"Deliciously funny. Why, my dear fellow, deliciously droll."

Kenwood's words rolled out richly, and his undeniable, wholesome embonpoint asserted itself in a series of convulsive chuckles—like a toad choking to death.

"Well"—Tillinghast's voice cut in keenly across the overlapping chuckles—"mild kleptomania isn't so bad; but I'm afraid he'll get in deeper. They laugh about it here because they know he has all the money he wants and would never think of keeping a thing permanently; but I tell you it's serious."

"It's just a phase. He'll outgrow it," replied the chuckley cousin, controlling a spasm of misplaced humor.

"Look what a splendid father he has?"

"And what if that splendid father knew of this weird development in his otherwise lovable son?"

"Oh, but why should he? It's only in sport Howard does those things. Nobody would dare speak to him about it; besides, what would be the good?"

"Suit yourself," said Tillinghast curtly, "but if I had the influence over the boy that you have I'd give him a jolt—a jar, you know. He might make off with something valuable some day and lose it, and if the story ever got out, it would be a pretty scandal. Nice for his family and all that sort of thing. Give the reporters a picnic for a while, too. Help everybody."

"Well—the other sobered up a bit, having a horror of the press—" maybe he should be cautioned; but I really don't see the good of it. That would stop it all. As soon as his attention is called to the serious side of the thing he'll give it up and then we'll have no more naive little excuses and explanations from him. They do so break the monotony here. Oh, bosh, Tillinghast, you're making sticky fly-paper out of a postage stamp; the thing'll never get outside the club."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that. Kleptomania's a dangerous disease—he might get quarantined for it, you know—people do."

"Such a solemn Tillinghast we have this afternoon," mocked the other. "Young Keller's all right, I'll wager you he'll never bump his nose against any thing worse than a bottle. Why, he'll be falling in love one of these days and the girl'll pull him away from these boyish tricks."

"I hope you're right," and Tillinghast moved on to the coat-room. "I do hope so—but you so seldom are, you know."

A wholesome chuckle greeted this retort and the care-free clubman clapped Tillinghast on the back, administering the advice that he make tracks for the bar and purchase a charm to exorcise

the imaginary hobgoblins from his cobwebby mind.

In a strangely preoccupied manner, oppressed by what he had seen and imagined, Tillinghast walked down the steps of the clubhouse probably an hour after Keller had left, and followed in the direction taken by the young fellow.

He walked across to Broadway and down almost to Fortieth Street. There Tillinghast turned into a fashionable little café, much frequented by men of his class, and sauntered down the wandering aisle between the tables, nodding often to acquaintances and stopping to shake hands with several and chat a moment.

At a table in a dim far corner, alone, sulkily and evidently miserable, he found Keller. Going over, Tillinghast, without a word, pulled back a chair and seated himself opposite.

"Well?" said Keller, looking up at Tillinghast as though he resented his intrusion.

"I thought you were pledged not to drink—or was it only not to drown?" asked Tillinghast languidly, holding his stick tightly as he gave a sharp glance into the startlingly luminous eyes of his *vis-à-vis* and noted his despair-drooped lips, and caught the reek of strong liquor.

"I am pledged; I haven't had a drop to drink," was the annoyed reply.

"Oh, I see—*rum omelet!*"—smiled Tillinghast, glancing at a plate the waiter was hastily removing.

"Yes, three of 'em, two helpings of plum-pudding with brandy sauce, a pint of wine-jelly, and five claret lemonades," Keller slumped back in his chair vaingloriously, as though he had just received the freedom of the city for some meritorious act or other.

"Whew-w-w!" whistled Tillinghast. "Now if you'd have a pot of coffee and smoke two pure perique cigarettes you could finish up handsomely in the police-station after pulling a cabby's hat over his ears—or snatching the wheel away from a bicycle-cop and trying to run down the Horace Greeley statue."

"Pot of coffee, yes!" said Keller thickly, his flaming eyes drooping heavily and his chin sneaking in as though it feared somebody should see it. "Just ordered a *demi tasse*. Join me?"

"You'd better come out of this. Didn't you say the girl—you know, the one you're in love with—made you promise not to drink?"

"I don't drink, not a dropsh." The other lurched forward in the heavy eagerness of argument. "It's all right if I do; she doesn't care now, not any more, old chap. She hasn't spoken to me—understand—three merry days now."

"What did you do?"

"Not a thing, offisher, not a thing," Keller leered up ludicrously, evidently appreciating his own facetiousness as he assumed the rôle of a prisoner. "That's the worst of it." He swayed for a moment and then tried to stiffen up; finally he leveled his gaze and cried: "But I'm desperate, Till. Everything seems going wrong."

"I want you to come over and take a Turkish bath now," Tillinghast told him. "Get this stuff out of your system, and then go up and see the girl to-night and straighten everything out. You're beginning to slip, old man—somebody's greased the incline, or you've done it yourself, and you're on your way down. Pull up!"

"Honest," rejoined the other, with heavy earnestness, "I haven't had a drink for three months, not since I told her I wouldn't."

"But these claret lemonades and rum omelets?"

"Only the last three days, Till; on the square. You see it's hurt me a good deal—here," he hazily indicated his heart.

"Yes, and it'll hurt you a good deal more—*here!*" and Tillinghast touched his forehead significantly, "if you don't cut it out. Come on over to the Turkish bath. I'll take one with you. We'll get fixed up proper and then square things with the girl."

"Wish I could. Where's this Turkish bath place?"

"Not two blocks away; come along!" Tillinghast pressed the other's arm firmly and looked at him steadily.

Finally persuaded, Keller rose and drifted out of the café, guided by Tillinghast, on whom he leaned inertly.

They walked to the Turkish bath and secured two adjoining private rooms. In five minutes' time Tillinghast, garbed in a huge rough towel, with his room-key attached to a thick rubber-band which he slipped over his wrist, according to the custom of key-carrying in a pocketless costume—knocked on Keller's door and waited a minute until his friend came out, the towel twisted fantastically about him, and a silly smile on his face.

Tillinghast noticed the glitter of something more than a room-key on the rubber-band about Keller's wrist. He looked away thoughtfully, and holding his companion by the arm, guided him to the elevator, which they entered, barefooted and cautious.

Three floors below they left the car and entered the oven-room, where an extremely high temperature was maintained to force perspiration. It was a quiet hour for the place, and the young fellows had the room entirely to themselves.

"Ouch!" wailed Keller, as he dropped weakly into one of the steamer-chairs. "Burned my wrist!" he exclaimed, rubbing the spot where his skin has come in contact with the roasting wood of the blanketed chair.

On pretense of examining the burn, Tillinghast caught the wrist and held it for a moment. But he did not look at the red spot; his attention was fixed on the thing that glittered beside the key on the thick rubber-band furnished by the management.

As he expected, it was the ring Keller had been fooling with at the club, and from Miss Hartworth's advertisement he knew it to be hers. Evidently Keller had feared somebody would steal it, and in his befuddled condition

had fastened the ring through his rubber wrist-band instead of trusting to the locker in his room, or the clerk's safe.

Tillinghast seated himself cautiously in a creaking, bone-dry chair next to Keller, threw the blanket over him, and lay back, assisting Keller to wrap up. Both were moist all over. The heat of the room was more than oppressive; it felt heavy, like a blight.

"I say," called Keller, two suffocating minutes later, "it's too darned hot for me in here. I'm going."

His voice sounded thin and flat in the heat surcharged atmosphere; his chair creaked and squeaked like a cricket as he lurched forward to rise. But Tillinghast caught his shoulder and pushed him back.

"Keller!" he exclaimed, talking louder than his wont, because his voice sounded so strange in the room, "you're getting to be a first-class mollycoddle. Can't you stand anything? Why don't you get a hold on yourself? You'll be drifting into gout or something if you keep on pampering your body."

Keller struggled to get out of the blistering chair and broke into violent perspiration with the effort. His fear of the heat was so evident that Tillinghast finally let him up and hurried after him through the door.

"If you're too hot, suppose you take a dip in the tank before we get our steaming—like the clams," advised Tillinghast.

"No!" cried Keller, grabbing the knob to the steam-room. "I don't like water."

"So you don't like water?" queried Tillinghast a minute later after he had groped his way through the steam-room and had dropped down on a dripping cement bench beside the indistinct form of Keller.

"No, I hate it," answered Keller.

"Then a Turkish bath's no place for you—you'd like a desert better."

"Oh, the steam-room's all right, and I like an alcohol rub-down—it's next

thing to a drink. I can stand a little shower, too. But deliver me from getting into the tank. Why, I wouldn't get in if it were filled with champagne."

"There's no chance of that," laughed Tillinghast.

At the same time his dripping face drew into a calculating expression, he paused a moment, then reached out through the thick steam, and before Keller knew what was going on, grasped the rubber-band to which the diamond ring was attached and jerked it over Keller's hand, quickly slipping it on his own wrist.

"Here! What the mischief! Till, give me that!"

"I'll give it to the owner," answered Tillinghast firmly. "Why on earth did you take that ring from Miss Hartworth?"

"What do you know about it?" demanded Keller, reaching over and feverishly grappling with Tillinghast's indistinct arms in an effort to locate the band.

"I know that you cleverly got it from her last Saturday when you were riding in a taxi with her on Fifth Avenue. Don't you realize she's all wrought up over it and is offering a reward of two hundred and fifty through Sterling, for its return—dead or alive?"

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Keller. Then a sullen tone replaced his excited exclamation and he demanded: "Well, what business is it of yours, anyway?"

"Only this, Kell," and Tillinghast gripped the arms of the younger man; "you've got to cut out these little practical jokes of yours. Nobody's ever had the nerve to say a word to you about it before. Your pride ought to come to your rescue. You've got to understand that it's not funny to go around picking up other people's things and then returning them mysteriously after you've satisfied your abnormal craving for excitement, or whatever it is that prompts you to this foolishness."

"What's the matter with you, Til-

linghast?" cried the other in an alarmed tone. "I never took a thing. You're almost calling me a thief. Do be a bit careful!"

His fingers were nervously playing about, in an effort to break Tillinghast's hold.

"It's for your own good, Kell. The fellows at the club think it's funny because you're young and come from such a good family; because they like you, and all that, but one of these days they'll realize their mistake—and yours."

"Don't be an ass!" cried Keller. "Give me that ring. If you don't I'll get an attendant here in a second and explain the whole thing and you'll find yourself in a pretty pickle. If this is a practical joke, all right; I can stand any kind of a joke, even when the humor becomes so subtle that it disappears. Give me that ring!"

"Hold on to yourself, Kell," urged Tillinghast, realizing that the effect of rum omelets and claret lemonade gave the young fellow a spirit of bravado that went ridiculously with his puny frame and retiring manner. "If you called an attendant I'd have to explain a thing or so, too. This ring is unique, and it exactly answers the description of the one for which Miss Hartworth is advertising. The thing could be proved against you in a minute, and then how would you feel?"

"You're wrong this time, and I'll prove it. I say, let go of me or I'll call somebody, and we'll settle this thing."

"You mean if I do let go of you, you'll call one. No, Kell, for your own good I won't do that."

"You'd get in trouble if you did. You cad! Can't you be decent?"

A sudden flush of anger controlled Tillinghast. Subconsciously he tightened his grip on the slippery young fellow and twisted his wrist, causing a sharp cry of pain.

"Now, we're going to get to the bottom of this thing," declared Tillinghast. "I don't like to talk to you in



this way, and it tires me to hold you, with all your petulant twistings; but I want you to sober up, Kell, and realize what you're coming to. Right now you're crunching along on the crust of crime, as I told your cousin at the club to-day, after you'd returned Scroggins's cigarette-case. You've got to take a brace—a brace of braces."

Keller splashed his feet nervously on the sloppy floor and tried to wriggle from Tillinghast's grasp.

"You're a perfect rotter!" he blurted out like an angry boy. "And yet they call you a prince of good fellows, and all that rot. You're as unsportsmanlike as a bank clerk, and, furthermore, you're a bully."

"I know the four years' disparity in our ages makes me look like a bully, Kell," replied Tillinghast. "But, to tell the truth, you seem like a boy to me, and my drastic action is only urged on by a sort of parental necessity. You've got to come to your senses, and somebody's got to lead you there. Now, I'm going to take it upon myself to return this ring to Miss Hartworth, and what would you think if I told her all about how it came into my possession?"

"I'd think you were a very courteous gentleman, naturally," sneered the other; it was evident the jolt he had received had somewhat shaken the hold of the rum omelets.

"Well, that's what I'm going to do, unless you promise to give over this little business of picking up things that don't belong to you."

"I tell you that ring is mine!" cried Keller, now really frightened.

"Then why do you squirm at my showing it to Miss Hartworth? If it's really yours, you can explain it easily enough; but the engraving inside will argue against any false stories, you know."

"The ring's mine! Give it to me!" cried Keller desperately.

Making a frantic effort to break Tillinghast's hold, he suddenly slid along the seat toward a bell in the wall.

"None of that!" exclaimed the other, catching his intention. "I tell you I'm in earnest. You've gone far enough. You need a good scare."

"The governor'll have a thing or two to say to you when we get out of this," Keller was now savagely sullen.

"And I'll have something to say to him. I'll tell him what you're coming to and recite a few of your little tricks at the club. Do you think they'll amuse him, make him smile as the fellows do?"

There was silence except for Keller's hard, fast breathing, and the rippling of the tank in the middle of the steam-room. Then, on a sudden, the younger fellow doubled up quickly and butted his head into Tillinghast's chest, jolting him from the narrow bench to the slippery floor. They rolled together, Tillinghast struggling to regain his hold and Keller fighting to evade it, to the edge of the cold-water tank in the middle.

Keller managed to squirm across Tillinghast and catch two tense fingers inside the rubber band, holding the ring at Tillinghast's wrist.

With a wrench the band snapped, and Tillinghast made one effort to grab the smaller man as his form slipped away in the enveloping mist. He managed to catch a heel, Keller having got nimbly to his feet. With a quick jerk, Tillinghast threw the other foot off balance, the vague form swayed above him for a moment, toppled, and then splashed head first into the cold-water tank.

Quick as thought, Tillinghast was in after him, diving for the fellow, who had screamed and sent up a multitude of big bubbles on going down.

He had him up in a moment, gasping, spluttering, and screaming inarticulately. Tillinghast remembered Keller's fear of the water, and cautiously clung to the slippery ladder with one hand while he held his companion, floundering and splashing, spluttering and cursing, out in the middle of the tank.

"Give me that ring!" Tillinghast demanded.

"Go to the deuce!" spluttered Keller, now dreadfully sober, his teeth chattering miserably.

For answer Sardonis Tillinghast released his left hand from the ladder, placed it gently on Keller's head, and bobbed it under the surface, holding it there a second.

Then he jerked him, neck and shoulders, above the water, teeth chattering, and pale. Tillinghast stared into the fear-fixed face and slowly repeated his command: "Give me that ring!"

For answer a trembling hand wavered toward him through the lighter mist of steam nearer the surface, and Tillinghast took from its tightly clenched fingers, reluctantly loosening, the broken rubber band with the ring and key. Reaching up to the cement floor, he dropped the thing in safety, and then turned to the quivering head in the middle of the pool.

"Give me your promise never to pick up another thing that doesn't belong to you," he said in an even tone.

A spasm of fear shot over the face of Keller, and he glanced down at the rippling surface of the black water.

Then Tillinghast's hand slipped, and Keller sank beneath the surface of the pool, sending up a series of bubbles.

In a second Tillinghast had plunged in and was diving for his friend. In half a minute he had Keller's head out of the water, and with frantic haste lifted him bodily to the floor of the steam-room, where he lay unconscious. Then Tillinghast shouted for help.

Two attendants sprang to his assistance, and Tillinghast looked around for a barrel or something on which to roll Keller. His eyes were frantic with fear.

"What's the matter?" cried one of the attendants.

"Drowned, I guess," answered Tillinghast.

For ten minutes they worked over the fellow frantically, and at last all

the water seemed to be removed from Keller's lungs; he spluttered, and his eyes flickered open.

Seeing Tillinghast, he asked weakly: "Where's the ring?"

"I'll get it," and, darting back into the steam-room, Tillinghast returned to press the ring into the weak palm of the man he had almost drowned.

They carried him to a cot, and in ten minutes he had revived sufficiently so that Tillinghast could tell him how sorry he was to have so nearly caused a tragedy.

"That's all right, 'Till," said the young fellow weakly. "I've got to give over this foolish business of picking up things and keeping them a while."

"Then you admit you took the ring?"

"No. You're wrong this time. I am engaged to Miss Hartworth. This is the engagement-ring I gave her when we were riding Saturday in the taxi. She lost it and was afraid to tell me, but I saw her advertisement. Then I went to the taxi stand and hunted up the chauffeur who had driven us on Saturday. Just this morning I found him, and by paying him a reward managed to get the ring back; he had found it in the bottom of the taxi, where Miss Hartworth had dropped it, as I expected. I am going to take it back to her as soon as I can get out of here."

"Great Heavens, man!" cried Tillinghast. "You don't mean that ring is yours—really yours—and that you have tried for three days to get it back for Miss Hartworth?"

"That's it," grinned Keller.

"Well, I *am* a fool. How can you ever forgive me?"

"Oh, that's all right, 'Till! I'm so glad to get out of that water I could forgive you anything. Besides, those practical jokes of mine gave you some right to consider I might be playing another this time. But never again for me. I don't like this business of parading as a sheep in wolf's clothing."

Tillinghast, greatly confused by his horrible blunder, was asking a thousand pardons. Finally he looked up and remarked: "But I thought you said Miss Hartworth hadn't spoken to you for days?"

"Three days it's been," answered Keller with a smile. "But I understand her silence now. She wouldn't let me call for fear I'd notice she had lost my ring. She didn't have any idea I knew it all the time. Everything will be all right now."

"Kell," said Tillinghast, reaching out his hand, "I'm awfully sorry I've made a fool of myself. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Well," smiled the other, "it's taught me a lesson. I'm going to cut out these little practical jokes in the future, and then nobody will have cause to suspect me."

"Good idea," answered Tillinghast; "but I swear I never thought you had the slightest claim to that ring, and here it was yours all the time."

# *In the Land of Illusion*



by Charles G. Barney, Jr.

**A**NOTHER stage story!" you exclaim in disgust. I can hear you now sniffing, with provocation, too, for there has been such a lot written about the stage, and the air with which you throw this tale aside indicates the quality of those other tales; but, you see, this is different.

I have been on the stage. I know some things about it; I think so many things that I am emboldened to attempt to impart some of my dearly bought local-color.

I use the words "dearly bought" advisedly; for you must know that stage-folk don't get the salaries they swear they do, nor do they always get half of what they are promised; and when one

is fortunate enough to land a seventy-five dollar a week contract, it is doubtless only for twenty weeks, and during the remaining thirty-two the "artist" is going the weary rounds of agencies, attempting to get booked on any old thing, anywhere.

Strange as it may seem, one of the complaints always registered against my stage tales is that they are too unreal. Would you like to know why? Just because, having played the game myself, I am not able to tell of it as it is supposed to be; and the way it is makes such different reading from what one expects and that which the editors are sure is the thing the public wants.

I believe they are wrong; sometimes the public likes a true tale; that is why I insist upon telling you of the fortunes of a certain Millie Ferguson (no relation to Elsie), who felt the lure of the footlights, and, setting her face toward the "Land of Illusion," left the sheltering roof of her greataunt in the middle West and came to the great City (which, when spelled with a capital, Edna Ferber says, always means New York).

I will not attempt to explain to you why Millie was stage-struck. There was really no particular reason; only I am inclined to believe that some time in the lives of most young people (and some old ones, too) there comes a desire to be something which they are not—in other words, to act.

And so it was with this little, rather pretty, not especially clever or bright, young person who came to the city expecting to have it open its great arms to her, etc., etc. (for further details read any well-fabricated stage-life novel).

Millie journeyed by train, and almost from the start began to have adventures.

Have you ever noticed how there are some people to whom things always happen? They are usually looked upon with envy by their more prosaic brothers and sisters; but, between you and me (and I am one of those to whom things happen), not one of the adventurous folk but would gladly change places with a more sedate individual.

In the same car in which Millie voyaged toward the Mecca of all artists were a man and his oldish wife, who turned out to be actor-folk, and so the Thespian aspirant got friendly with the oldish woman; and, although the little person from the middle West was of the timid, clinging-vine variety, she boldly asserted that she, too, was going to be an actress.

The woman whose eyes had already blinked into the glare of the footlights looked at Millie, and her expression was not unlike that of the friends at

home when Millie had first begun mentioning her aspirations, and she had listened with none too sympathetic ear.

For every one in Millie's town had felt it necessary to do all possible to dissuade her from her wild idea.

There had been in particular a person called "Bob," who had been most vehement in his denunciations of tinsel glory, and called down the wrath of Heaven upon the Land of Illusion. Bob's unkind words had sealed his doom, or hers, or both; for Millie had at once bought her ticket.

The actor-woman did not attempt to dissuade the girl, but she asked her questions—questions which to Millie's mind were startling, because they were about things in regard to which she had never thought. So the girl got nervous, but the actress went ahead asking more questions, and, among others, she demanded where Millie was "going to stop."

Millie was a little frightened, and for a moment forgot to reply. Then suddenly it came to her that she had left the book with the address of her prospective landlady at home on the mantelpiece.

She told her questioner all she remembered.

"The number ends in five," she began thoughtfully. "And it was east, I think; but I am not sure, although I *am* certain about the five."

Then the girl nearly cried, and the actress remarked that she knew of a good place kept by a lady named Green.

"It will be just right for you," she added.

Millie was delighted.

"It is on Forty-Fifth Street, near Broadway," the woman continued, and gave the exact number (which I could mention if I wished). Then she loaned Millie a pencil and a bit of paper, so as not to trust this valuable information to her evidently uncertain memory.

Arrived in New York, and at the abiding place of the person called Green, Millie engaged a rather nice room. (It is only in stories that the

lodging-houses in New York are so dirty and ill-smelling, for really the competition is so strong that places have to be kept in better than "literary repute," otherwise they would have no patrons.)

Miss Ferguson's room was very tiny, and when she got in and unpacked she had to pack again to get out, and all this work took time and caused her almost to miss her dinner.

Immediately upon her return from this the landlady came to collect her rent in advance.

Mrs. Green was a large person with operatic bosom, swathed in a square-cut, black, perfectly fitting garment, demi-train, jet ornaments, and with elaborate hair of several textures. She was agreeable and kind-seeming, and said that Millie might prepare her breakfasts in her kitchen and use her stove. Millie had timidly asked about this, knowing that she must be careful of her pennies.

To Millie's inexperienced ear "The Green" talked most queerly. She explained that the neighborhood was in "the sporty part of town," and that if the newcomer did not wish to have "her duds pinched" she had better keep her door locked; and as there was only one key, she suggested that this be "bunked" where the maid could find it. She went on to explain that her house was "a straight joint," but sometimes "crooks" would get in and "crab a place"!

When she had swept away, Millie was terrified. She closed and locked the door, and put the chair and water-pitcher against it, then sat on the bed, tucking her feet up under her, fearful lest some "crooked" hand steal out and grab her defenseless ankle.

It grew dark early, but she continued to sit there. She was so hungry and tired and dazed. Then she began to cry. Afterward she went to sleep, having undressed without stepping from the bed.

The day following she spent attempting to get used to the noise and glare

and rush. And, oh, it was hot in her little pen, and she was so lonely! She almost admitted to herself that she would have been glad to see Bob.

The streets she found wonderfully alluring, and the shop-windows were "just splendid." She discovered a cheap eating-place quite near by; but in the dark hall, as she came out, a man tried to kiss her, at least she thought that was what he tried to do, and she made a vicious jab at him with her hatpin, and after that, although she had not touched him, he desisted.

The street crossings were an endless surprise; for she was certain that the cop held back crowds of pedestrians only while he assembled a host of cabs and automobiles, then waved the crowd of people forward to reach the middle of the street only to sick the vehicles upon them, withdrawing himself to a safe distance, to watch the wild struggle and frantic mix-up. The strange part of it to her was that the public never seemed to catch on, but continued to play the deadly game over and over again.

After breakfast the next morning Millie passed the "actress-lady" of the train in the hallway. Both were surprised at the encounter. Millie had not known that the other woman was living in the same house, and that person had never supposed that the girl would find the place.

Millie, delighted to find some one to talk with, began at once to retail her adventures, but the woman seemed not particularly interested.

She looked puffed and sleepy, but a wave of pity swept her benumbed senses, so she gave Millie names and addresses of some theatrical managers and agents.

The girl hurried back up-stairs and dressed herself in her best gown and sallied forth.

At the first place there was a long line of men and women sitting quietly in the darkness and heat of a sort of anteroom. They seemed nervously apprehensive, and frequently bit their

fingers. Watching them, Millie got the fidgets, and she, too, began to gnaw at her fingers. She didn't know why, but it seemed the thing to do.

No one spoke—that was the awful part of it. They all seemed so unfriendly. They just sat and sat and sat. Sometimes one would get up and silently slink away, and the place would be taken by one of the standees.

The actress-to-be did not see that this was getting her anywhere, so she got to her feet and went through a swing-gate that gave admittance to the brighter end of the room.

No one said anything. Millie paused and waited. Nothing happened. She gathered courage and went forward to a woman who sat busily thumping her desk with a paper-cutter.

Millie spoke to her, and asked if she would get her a good engagement. She laid particular emphasis on the "good," for she had no intention of being side-tracked with some foolish little cheap company.

The woman replied without raising her eyes from her absorbing occupation of thumping: "Do you sing?"

"No'am."

"Then you will have to say your say to Mrs. F——. Good morning." She said this last with an upward inflection of the voice which was so cleverly managed that it seemed to sweep the young woman off her feet and waft her to the other desk which backed up against this one.

The woman at this desk looked cross and dyspeptic, and Millie was beginning to be tired out with agents; but she spoke sweetly to this weary person who gazed at her with a strange expression, and asked dully: "What experience have you had?"

Millie Ferguson was now in her element. She explained that she had played in a lot of things. Before she came near the end of the long-drawn breath on which she was winging such names as Shaw and Wilde and Ibsen, the woman cut her short with: "Where?"

Millie told her, and the woman asked acidly: "Amateurs?"

"Yes."

"The woman snapped out: "I cannot use you, then."

So Miss Ferguson haughtily withdrew and went to another agency. This time she did not have to wait. The agent was a man. He took her at once into his holy of holies, and there he attempted to squeeze her hand, and he said things, too; so Millie left, her face flushed and her eyes dewy.

After this little experience she went on the trail of the managers. One was away; another was too busy to see her. Those that she did succeed in seeing were either "all booked" or had no need of her services. Some of them were nice, but most she considered "horrid."

And this sort of thing went on for a week. By that time she was tired, and began to get discouraged, but she fought against it.

She came by a newspaper in which she found a long list of managers' names and addresses, and these she copied in her little book and began her trips all over again. Somehow now when she went into an office she could not talk when it came her turn; and she would always whisper her request in the stolid face of an impatient perspiring man usually with a hooked nose.

At night frequently she cried. No one seemed to want her, and yet no one ever asked her to recite even one thing, although she knew many "pieces" which had never failed to win a round of applause in her native town.

She continued the search for three weary weeks more. Her money was almost gone, and she looked ill and worn. Her clothes grew shabby, and her shoes were off at the side of the heel.

More than once she had grown panic-stricken when she began to think of what would become of her when her money gave out. She no longer had sufficient to return home. She

would have died rather than appeal to her great-aunt, who was very poor, and who, she knew, would tell Bob of her predicament, and he had always said that she would never become an actress, but would return home and marry him.

She ceased seeking an engagement, and remained in the house and wrote letters and worked on a crochet necktie which, she dared hardly tell herself, was intended for Bob.

One night terror at the thought of being stranded seized her, and in the morning she got up with the fear still upon her, and began going the rounds again. But now the wretched beings who sat and sat depressed her so that she could hardly endure the sight.

She attempted to lie about her professional experience, and say that she had been on the stage, but it was no use; she always got caught.

Some days she was actually glad to be told that a manager would not see her.

The heat was terrible, and she was bedraggled and fagged in every way. At night she could not sleep for worrying. She was half-starved, and what little food she allowed herself would stick in her throat and sicken her. On the street people often insulted her, and she was very miserable.

Why prolong the agony? You doubtless have heard the tale better told by folk who know nothing whatever about it. But you will have to jump over two weeks' repetition of those things which I have been enumerating, and in your jumping do not imagine that the time flew equally fast for Miss Millie Ferguson. It did not!

Now, are you ready? The three weeks are accounted for? Well, the girl heard that a friend of hers was visiting in New Rochelle.

She determined to go up and see her friend. She thought the other girls might cheer her up a bit. She wrote and asked when she might come, and how. The answer arrived the next day, and in it was a note from the hostess of Millie's friend, asking that

she come at once and stay as long as her engagements would permit.

The reference to "engagements" made a lump rise in Millie's throat, but she went.

With the assistance of some half-dozen persons of whom she inquired the way, Millie eventually arrived at her destination.

She was too late for lunch, and, being very hungry, her temper was not of the best. To make matters worse, she found Bob was on the scene! He, too, was visiting at the same house!

He had not told her that he was even thinking of coming North, and she was provoked. Women only like surprises, even pleasant ones, theoretically.

Millie attempted to hide her feelings, and later tried to flirt with her some-time beau; but he would not flirt, and, what was worse, he did not seem sufficiently attentive.

Before dark Millie announced that she had to go back to the city. Bob accompanied her, although she was nasty about it.

At her own door-step he asked her to marry him.

"I'm not goin' to ask you to give up the stage for me, Millie," he announced.

"You can go on being an actress."

The girl looked at him. She thoroughly enjoyed hearing again the old familiar, gentle voice. The stage did not seem to be at all what she wanted to make her happy.

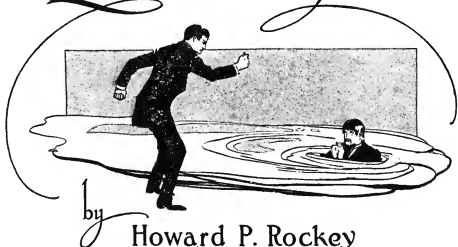
"I want—" she began.

"What?" he interrupted.

"I want—" Again her voice failed her.

The man caught her in his arms despite the glare of the many lights and the passing crowds. She lay silent for a moment; then, raising herself, whispered: "There isn't going to be any actress." As she continued, her lips felt scratched where they had been crushed against his prickly coat: "No, there isn't going to be an actress; there is just going to be a Mrs. Bob. I want you."

# The Letter He Didn't Want



by

Howard P. Rockey

**T**WO weeks after Jimmy Morton married the most beautiful woman in the world he was sent away—by his employers, not by his newly acquired wife. But this fact did not make the separation any easier for Jimmy, who was star salesman for the American Pocket Lighter Company of Newark, New Jersey.

To be sent away three days after completing one's honeymoon is in itself enough to cast the average man's soul into gloom. But, in addition to having to leave his bride of two weeks, Jimmy found himself face to face with other trials.

To begin with, Jimmy was six feet tall and built like a Greek god. This implies that he was handsome, and his bachelor cronies always said that after ten minutes' acquaintance, Jimmy could always hold the hand of the nicest girl present. Also, given a conservatory or a moonlit veranda, Jimmy was reputed to be able to kiss said young lady after ten additional minutes had elapsed.

But now Jimmy was married, and all the way down on the fruit steamer from New York to Ozora he had sat lonely and disconsolate upon the deck.

thinking of the cozy little cottage he had just furnished in East Orange. On board, also, was a young woman, who, Jimmy admitted to himself, was the second best looking woman he had ever seen.

She was disposed to be friendly; but for the first time in his life Jimmy belied his reputation, and, feeling prosperous with a generous wad of expense money in his pocket, he resorted to wireless. But, at best, married courting at long distance is unsatisfactory.

At last, however, he found himself installed in the Grand Hôtel d'Inglaterra, at Ozora, to remain there until he had accomplished his mission of placing American-made pocket-lighters within the reach of every citizen of the indolent little South American republic.

Now, if you have never sat upon a bench on the Plaza at Ozora, in the calm of a soft, dreamy night—if you have never listened to the entrancing strains of the linen-clad band—if you have never observed daintily slipped and shimmery mantillaed *señoritas* sweeping languorously past in the dim light of the street lanterns—then you have no conception of Jimmy's trials



the first night after his arrival in Ozora.

Lazily, Jimmy stretched out his six-foot form and lighted a cigarette during a lull in his battle with the mosquitoes, utterly oblivious of the romantic spell a full and glorious moon cast over the little white-walled, red-roofed town.

From near-by balconies he could catch glimpses of filmy draperies, and now and then the flash of a pair of dark eyes impressed itself upon his vision. Somewhere the low, plaintive notes of a guitar feebly vied with the music of the band, and Jimmy heard a *caballero* singing softly and passionately in a tenor voice that would have commanded a three-figured salary on Broadway.

"If I'd only been here last week!" Jimmy muttered, with sad recollections of his sojourn at Atlantic City in company with the recently acquired Mrs. Morton. "Ideal sort of place for a wedding trip, only it makes me think of a comic opera. But to be here—now—alone!"

He refrained from further thought on the subject and ground his cigarette beneath his heel in disgust.

The band played a catchy Spanish dance, and Jimmy, unable to content himself longer, arose and strolled off in no particular direction. His thoughts were in East Orange, in a small seven-room cottage, although he should have been thinking that he had come to Ozora to arrange with the newly installed government for the sole rights to import pocket lighters into the country.

Now he passed out of the square and through a narrow, ill-lighted street. He swore at the bad paving, but passed on into another, and then into a third street. In a few moments he was passing a high white wall, over the top of which the branches of great palm-trees spread shadowy in the moonlight. Somewhere close at hand he heard the sound of another guitar, and this time the singer was a woman.

Looking up, he beheld a little balcony with a lattice-work, through which a dim light showed faintly. There was a shadow before it, and Jimmy saw the figure of a woman dressed all in black, save for a gauzy silvered mantilla and a red rose in her dark hair. Jimmy saw her smile slightly, and it seemed as though she threw him a kiss.

Determinedly he turned away and walked more quickly—his thoughts returning to the little East Orange cottage.

But just at that moment something soft struck his cheek, and he paused, startled, as a rose fell at his feet. He glanced upward, and caught the flash of the whitest of white teeth through the reddest of red lips, all the property of the lady whose exceedingly pretty face was now quite clear as she leaned out over the balcony edge.

A feeling of outraged dignity seized Jimmy. He scowled at the young woman, and with a gesture of impatience stamped upon the rose just as he had treated the unhappy cigarette that offended him a short time before. Then, without looking upward or rearward, Jimmy hastened back to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, drank a brandy-and-soda, and took himself indignantly to his room.

In a pair of silk pajamas he sat on the edge of the bed and wrote another letter to Mrs. Jimmy Morton. After that, for some minutes, he conversed with, or rather at, the large photograph of that lady which adorned his bureau, finally putting out the light and going to bed.

Arising early, he breakfasted on the little portico overlooking the plaza, meanwhile making inquiries as to where he might find the various officials he had come to see. Jimmy was a hustler, but probably any man so situated would have hustled with the thought that he might return to East Orange as soon as he had completed his arrangements concerning the introduction of pocket lighters into Ozora.

So, armed with proper directions, he

set off briskly on foot to make his first business call. Hardly had he left the hotel, however, when a middle-aged man of somewhat faded distinction, drew alongside him and held out a lavender envelope; from which Jimmy sniffed the faint scent of perfume. He looked up in surprise, regarded the note suspiciously, and then gazed questioningly at the smiling face of the bearer.

"For the *señor*," the man said politely.

At once it dawned upon Jimmy. The note was from the woman who had thrown him the rose the previous evening. Such impertinence he had never known—even he, the admired of every pretty woman! At first he almost doubted his suspicions, but the whole thing seemed plain to him now.

He knew no ladies in Ozora; yet the envelope was such that no one but a woman would use it, and for her most particular social correspondence. Besides, no other woman in the town had particularly observed him; and, from his adventure of the evening before, Jimmy knew he had made a hit with the one who had thrown her flower to him.

Naturally, she had been piqued when he ignored her advances, and now she had sent this shabby messenger with a note—probably inviting him to a rendezvous. It was not the first time in Jimmy's life that such a thing had happened to him; but, now that he was married, the situation was different.

At first he was inclined to be tolerant, for undoubtedly the lady did not know that he had a wife in East Orange. But then he grew angry that any one should so presume to flirt with him, and his fists clenched. How dared she send a note to a married man!

"The *señor* will read?" the man persisted.

"The *señor* will not!" exclaimed Jimmy emphatically. "Get out! Beat it!"

The man looked at him in disappointment, but Jimmy's threatening manner caused him to move away

quickly. From a distance he watched Jimmy, however, as the irate young man stalked on and entered the office of the first official on his list.

For half an hour Jimmy talked pocket-lighters, and, because the incident of the scented note still rankled in his mind, he brusquely objected to every condition the official attempted to make. Consequently, fifteen minutes later he left the building with the documents he desired safe in his breast-pocket.

On the steps waited the man who had previously accosted him. Smiling and suave, the man approached at once and again proffered the lavender envelope. Angrily Jimmy brushed him aside and hurried across the street to the office of the second man he wanted to see. The bearer of the note was plainly crestfallen, but when Jimmy emerged an hour later the man's patience had not been exhausted. He was still there, holding out the missive with a plaintive air.

"The *señor* will not refuse—" he began in a whining tone.

"Look here!" said Jimmy, turning about impatiently. "I'm married! I receive no letters from even the most attractive lady in Ozora. Don't hand me that thing again! Understand?"

Apparently the man did not understand, for he only shook his head and continued to hold out the letter.

"Vamose!" yelled Jimmy with upraised fist. And once more the messenger drew away, an injured look upon his face.

"Good Lord!" Jimmy muttered to himself. "It's the limit the way I make a hit with women!"

And, drawing himself up a little vainly, he hurried back to the hotel to write to his firm of the morning's work.

That afternoon, after the siesta hour, Jimmy was sitting upon the balcony outside his room, enjoying a quiet smoke and a cooling drink. Suddenly a figure on the plaza attracted his attention, and he recognized the

lady of the previous evening walking with an elderly companion. Even to Jimmy's blind eyes she was lovely. And at that moment she turned slyly, so as not to attract the attention of her companion, and her dark eyes laughed squarely into his. Then she passed on.

Hardly had she gone when Jimmy was attracted by a low whistle, and, looking down, he saw the man with the note staring up at him. Jimmy glared at him, but the man only held out the envelope and motioned to Jimmy to come down and get it. With an exclamation of disgust, Jimmy went inside and wrote another long letter to Mrs. Morton, but he did not mention the occurrences that had so upset him.

After dinner he grew more restless, and, lighting a cigar, strolled down to the water-front to watch the tiny lights of the vessels bobbing up and down in the little harbor. Suddenly, in a lonely spot, he heard a whisper behind him, and, swinging about, found himself face to face with the persistent note-bearer.

With a grin the man held out the envelope once more, respectfully removing his hat and bowing profoundly. It was too much! With an oath Jimmy seized the fellow and shook him violently.

"Haven't I told you to keep away from me?" he shouted, gripping the man's coat-collar more tightly. "I've a notion to throw you off the dock!"

"But, *señor*," the man pleaded. "If the *señor* will only open—"

Then Jimmy's temper got the best of him. Clutching the seat of the man's trousers with his free hand, he heaved him into the air and far out over the stone wall. There was a cry, a splash, and then silence for a moment.

Jimmy hesitated. Now he could see a dark form struggling in the water. Before he could move, however, there came the patter of running feet, and a lantern was thrust into his face. He was surrounded by an excited, jabber-

ing group of native policemen, who covered him with their rifles as they might a desperate criminal.

A call came from over the wall, and two of the policemen dragged the swimmer out of the water. Now there was more rapid exchange of Spanish and a barefooted officer in a once gorgeous uniform pushed his way through the little group.

Dripping and with chattering teeth, Jimmy's victim told his story, and without further ceremony the police led them both off to the office of *el capitan de policia*. Jimmy was furious. He longed to drag the effeminate little official from behind his desk and serve him as he had served the bearer of the scented note. But his captors prodded his ribs with the muzzles of their short rifles, and *el capitan* calmly twirled his long mustache as the water-soaked complainant pleaded his case.

Then the official turned and gazed with well-assumed sternness at Jimmy, addressing him in Spanish.

"You'll have to talk United States," Jimmy retorted angrily. "I can't understand that jabbering."

*El capitan* smiled indulgently and addressed himself once more to the dripping man, from whose garments little streams of water were rapidly forming pools upon the stone floor.

"Look here!" shouted Jimmy, interrupting. "I can't make out what you're trying to get out of your system, but you'd better make an effort to understand me. I'm down here to sell pocket-lighters, and I want to be allowed to do it in peace. I can't help it if I'm good-looking and your *señoritas* fall in love with me. But unless you release me at once and keep this old idiot away from me while I'm here, I'll have a United States gunboat come down and blow your dinky little town off the map! Get that?"

Apparently *el capitan* did. The words "United States gunboat" at least conveyed an intelligent meaning to him. One had once been there, and

he did not desire to be the means of bringing another unnecessarily.

He bowed to Jimmy, explained something rapidly to the shivering complainant, and then motioned to Jimmy's guards to stand back. With elaborate courtesy, *el capitán* apologized to Jimmy—at least, Jimmy assumed that he was apologizing—and with a dignified gesture he halted the official's effusive flow of language.

Still furious, Jimmy made his way back to the hotel and entered the courtyard. Just inside the gate he stopped abruptly, for, seated by the fountain was the young woman who had been responsible for his adventure. Beside her stood a man in white linen, and in his hand he held a pink envelope.

Jimmy frowned. Then, as the man came quickly toward him, holding out the note, Jimmy swore. Angrily he struck the letter from the man's outstretched hand, and, without giving heed to the fellow's astonished protest, quickly crossed the court to where the young woman was sitting.

At his approach she arose in alarm, but Jimmy did not pause until he stood directly before her.

"Do you speak English?" he asked.

Timidly she shook her head and looked wonderingly at him, unable to comprehend his attitude. Then, seeing the look in his eyes, she gave a scream of terror.

Before Jimmy could speak again the courtyard was full of men, guests, servants, and police. In a rage, Jimmy faced them all, too much upset to explain his difficulties for the moment. To the hotel proprietor he finally began to relate all that had happened, exclaiming that he would leave the hotel immediately rather than submit to such pestering any longer.

Excitedly the young woman spoke to the proprietor, and vainly attempted to make her side of the case known to those who only understood English.

"It's an outrage!" cried Jimmy, stamping his foot. "I tell you I won't be bothered like this any longer!"

Just then an admirer of the *señorita* stepped through the crowd, and, rising on tiptoe, slapped Jimmy squarely on the cheek. Like a flash Jimmy seized and hurled him into the fountain.

In an instant the place was in an uproar. The *señorita* screamed, the servants began to shout, and the crowd gathered closer about Jimmy.

Then the group drew back. Some one had sent for *el capitán de policía*, and now he appeared, a tall American following at his heels.

"Do you want to go into the fountain, too?" Jimmy cried.

But the tall American pushed forward, smiling, and signed to Jimmy to restrain himself for a moment.

"What's all the row?" he asked. "I am the American consul."

"Thank Heaven—a white man at last!" exclaimed Jimmy with a sigh of relief. Then he quickly told the new arrival what had taken place.

The consul laughed and conferred with *el capitán*, who promptly demanded that the shivering note-bearer produce the missive Jimmy had refused to receive. Tearing it open, the consul glanced at it, and with a chuckle turned it over to Jimmy, signing to him to read it.

"Will the gracious *señor* lend the bearer two dollar American?" Jimmy read in astonishment. The note was signed "Pedro Martinez," the name of the persistent messenger.

At first Jimmy was inclined to laugh. Then he remembered the pink envelope and its bearer, who had adopted this novel means of soliciting alms. That he was sure had been sent by the *señorita*. His vanity never suggested anything else.

The consul asked for it. It was produced, the proprietor explaining that the man who had offered it to Jimmy was a clerk in the hotel. Taking the pink note in his hand, Jimmy gave it one look, and then flushed deeply in his embarrassment.

The post-mark was East Orange, and the handwriting was his wife's.

# The Log=Book

By the Editor

TWO FAVORITES COME BACK.

OUR old friends, *Steve Girton* and *Ned Hemmett* come to the front again next month, in answer to "A Call to Arms," the new story Edgar Franklin has written around these two popular heroes, whose adventures in "The Chase of the Concession" and other tales of Guanama proved so fascinating to our readers. In "A Call to Arms," the book-length novel which will open the January ARGOSY, these two gentlemen are roused from a rather somnolent existence in New York by a visit from a peculiar gentleman with a South American cast of countenance and a dread of pursuers that is not wholly conducive to calming the nerves.

Will they go back? Guanama needs them just now, and will make it well worth their while to exchange a sky-scraper office-suite in Manhattan for a sojourn in the land where there are no blizzards and where revolutions are served out on demand with almost the regularity of one's morning paper.

Why, of course they will go. It is the call of the blood, likewise of the wild, and all that sort of thing, but no sooner have they set out on the steamer bearing them southward than unaccountable things begin to happen. But these are not a marker to what takes place after they reach Guanama, and find it grown almost out of recollection, with palaces in place of humble shacks and a mysterious foe who lurks in the swamps and picks off men with the unshakable lure of the magnet.

Thrilling, indeed, are the things that befall the two New Yorkers when they venture themselves into the lair of the foe. Talk about your close calls! Read what happens to the fly in the stew the captives are given to eat. And courage? But you'll find it all set forth in "A Call to Arms," which will be published complete in next month's ARGOSY, on sale five days before Christmas.

## "SOMETHING QUEER IN UTICA."

IN the next number of THE ARGOSY we are going to give you a long short story under the above title. It was written by Seward W. Hopkins, a favorite among our contributors, and a native son of Utica himself, so you may be sure there will be nothing in the tale derogatory of the city so pleasantly located in the Mohawk Valley. Indeed, Mr. Hopkins's description of the town in his opening paragraphs would well fit him to become publicity man in a Utica booming campaign.

The queer happening has to do with a crime that tarnishes not a whit the city's reputation for keeping out of the papers pretty persistently so far as the record of horrible occurrences within her borders is concerned. Whether you belong in Utica or not, I predict you will be deeply interested in reading all about it.

## MAGAZINE FICTION CAPPED BY NEWSPAPER FACT.

LAST month I mentioned a coincidence in the daily news bearing on the first instalment of "Flirting With Desperate Hazard." Again a similar instance has come to light, this time in connection with "Before the Dark," the new serial starting in the present number of THE ARGOSY. As the type-setting machines were putting these opening chapters into shape, the New York newspapers recorded the suicide in Central Park of a business man because he was going blind.

But don't fear that Mr. Bradshaw's hero is going to make a tragedy of the tale by proceeding to such desperate lengths as this because of the prediction made in the gipsy's tent. The author has a far bigger surprise up his sleeve for you than that.

### TERHUNE'S NEXT AND FINEST.

**J**OHN PAUL JONES, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte! You've heard of all three of these gentlemen, of course. Well, they all figure in Albert Payson Terhune's new serial, "The Trouble Hunter," that begins in the next issue of THE ARGOSY, as a New Year's treat for you, the first of it reaching you in time, too, for a Christmas joy.

"The Trouble Hunter" is the very best story Mr. Terhune has written. I admit it is going some to say this, in view of the crackerjacks he has already turned out, but I am sure you will all agree with me when you have read this new tale that begins on the prison-ship Jersey anchored in the East River between New York and Brooklyn during our war for independence, continues on the high seas and in Paris, and ends with a spirited duel on horseback on the road to Versailles. The charm about Mr. Terhune's writing is that it gives you history in absolutely the most entertaining form and incites you to go to the library shelves for more information about the personages of whom such entertaining glimpses are given.

The incident in "The Trouble Hunter" wherein Napoleon figures, while based on historical data, is particularly unique. I am quite sure the great commander was never before employed against a story background at this particular stage of his career, which brings him in juxtaposition with the ill-fated Marie Antoinette.

### "HER RENTED FUTURE."

**T**HIS is the title of a short story in the January ARGOSY by Marie B. Schrader, whose novelette "Her Hero from Savannah," published in January, 1911, aroused so much favorable comment. "Her Rented Future" is a love story of rather unusual sort, with the heroine rejecting the man she loves at the outset for reasons that seem good to her. Then, when Destiny deals out the cards to her in a fashion to remove this objection, she comes within an ace of losing him because what's sauce for the goose is sauce and pudding, too, for the gander. We have had a great many requests from our readers for another love story and I shall be anxious to hear what they think of this one.

### A FEW WORDS ABOUT "WAR."

**I** DARE say you all know General Sherman's definition of war. You will be inclined heartily to indorse his sentiments when you read the short story next month by Richardson L. Wright, briefly called by this brief, ominous word of three letters. In this little tale the author of "The Clutch of Siberia" has turned out a clear-cut little gem of fiction, yet fiction so true to life that peace societies may well include it in their propaganda. Oh, and lest there be some of my readers who may not have heard the Sherman equivalent for war, I may say that it begins with h and contains four letters in all.

### BREAKING THE RECORD IN JOB HUNTING.

**Y**ESTERDAY a man came to me with a note of introduction from a friend. "Can you put me in the way of getting anything to do?" he said. "I want work."

I knew of nothing and my caller continued:

"It's the same way wherever I go. Nothing doing. Do you know how long I have been looking for a job?"

I couldn't hazard a guess, whereupon my visitor astounded me by the announcement:

"Seven years."

To be sure, he had had an income from commissions on collecting meantime, but he didn't call this a regular job. The incident reminds me of the position in which the hero of "The Forty Millionth Man" is placed. This is a short story by George Foxhall to appear in *THE ARGOSY* next month. But neither the flesh-and-blood individual nor the one of Mr. Foxhall's creation are of the fiction-stereotyped down-at-heels, out-at-elbow variety. The fellow you will read about in the January issue makes a desperate, if jocularly expressed, attempt to turn crook, and the queer tricks fate plays him gives the story as many twists as a corkscrew.

### "COWARD, LIAR, AND THIEF."

**S**TRONG terms these, to be employed by a lady. But you see the girl had strong provocation, and the man to whom she applied them was her own *fiancé*, so of course she felt that he would at least wait to hear her out before calling in the police to carry a crazy woman to the observation ward.

Bertram Lebhar has written the story surrounding this striking situation, and I am sure your sympathies will all go—does it sound very ungallant to say this?—with the man in the case. At any rate the plot of the tale is very unique and the moral thereof—well, possibly that may be summed up in the warning not to mix love and business. No, the girl isn't a stenographer, nor does she preside at her employer's telephone switchboard, nor is she the manicure in his barber-shop.

### THE ARGOSY and "Higher Literature."

I am very glad indeed to make space for this fine tribute to *THE ARGOSY* from C. R. W., Solvay, New York, whose attitude toward our magazine is exactly that which the editor hopes is that of all its readers—the expectation of finding in its pages wholesome relaxation.

I write not with the least desire to see my name or opinion in print, but with the earnest wish to refute a statement commented upon some time since in the Log-Book, namely: "No one could read *THE ARGOSY* who reads and likes the higher literature."

I read and like Tennyson—also *ARGOSY* stories; also Shakespeare and *THE ARGOSY*. Likewise Dickens—and *THE ARGOSY*. The immortal Shakespeare is with me in all my travels, and I turn to *THE ARGOSY* for relaxation. Now William Wallace Cook's story is started, and that is just what I want.

### An Improvement All Along the Line.

Circulation and comments both testify that our fifteen-cent move, with the accompanying betterment of the magazine, was a step in the right direction. Here is yet another booster for the change—Roy G. R., of Chicago, from whose letter I will quote as follows:

I have been a constant reader of your magazine since I was twelve years of age and never had a fault to find with it. I like your *Hawkins* series by Edgar Franklin: they are

good for the blues, but for complete novels I prefer "Her Hero from Savannah," by Marie B. Schrader; "At Thieves' Paradise," by Douglas Pierce; "A Silent Foe," by Seward W. Hopkins; "Heroes Both," and "Cleared for Action."

Among the serials I am interested in "The Motor-Bus Mystery." Your short stories are also good; in fact, *THE ARGOSY* is the best magazine any one wants to read. Since you have put out the new fifteen-cent edition I think it has improved all along the line, especially your complete novels.

### Hot Shot for the Critics.

If A. S. M. will pardon me for a moment I should like to keep him waiting long enough to tell C. W. F., of Boston, that we have on sale all copies of *THE ARGOSY* for the years 1906 and 1907 except April, 1906, and September, 1907.

A. S. M., whose home is in New York, but who wrote from Cincinnati, is informed that it is *Spielman's* cleverness as a lawyer that enables him to get away with leading questions. I trust A. S. M. did not pass out when he found that "Making a Fan of Him" was not concluded in the October issue. He writes:

You have made a constant reader of me by publishing book-length stories in one issue. I wrote you some time ago (from Detroit, I believe) on this subject, and I am glad to see that you have gratified my (?) wishes.

Furthermore, some of the serials have got me at last. Couldn't resist them, that's all.

If you do not finish "Making a Fan of Him" in your next issue, I believe I shall pass out of this world, due to unduly suppressed excitement. That story has "got me by the hip."

I just want to throw a little hot shot into some of your critics. "When one can't speak well of a man, it's far better to say nothing than to pick out the rough spots. If you like a story, praise it, if you don't, read it and say nothing, or, better, don't finish it. Occasionally I find flaws in a story, but let the other fellow be the *Citizen Fixit*."

However, there is just one question I want to ask you. This is for information and not criticism. In "Between Two Alibis" it seems to me that most of the questions *Spielman* asks in direct examination of witnesses are leading. Is this in accordance with the rules of evidence? I would like to know.

### Taking Up the Gage of Battle.

George L. A., of Philadelphia, wrote from Pittsburgh, under date of September 19, to say that for personal reasons he would never purchase another copy of THE ARGOSY. As an afterthought he adds:

However, I will purchase the October number to see if this letter appears. If it does not, I take for granted that nine-tenths of the letters you publish are written by you in your office.

He gave no address so that no reply could be made to him by mail and as the October issue was on sale the day his "threat" was received, it was manifestly impossible to print it in that number nor in November either, as the Log-Book was already made up for that month. I take this much notice of the communication in order to emphasize anew the absurdity of the charge that the letters appearing in these pages are "fakes." I should think that they are not would appear on the face of them.

### Who Can Put a Name to This Story?

Here's a letter which I dare say many will think I wrote myself simply because I can't place even initials to it, because the writer forgot to sign his name after getting off his effusion (dated at Auburn-dale, Florida) on the typewriter. I want to print it, however, as I can't place the story he describes, although I have a vague recollection of it, and perhaps some of you can recall its title.

I have been a reader of THE ARGOSY for several years; in fact, since 1898, the first ones being given to me. They contained a serial

railroad story which was great. I have always been satisfied with THE ARGOSY and think it fine except in one particular: I don't like a browbeating man like *Hawkins*, nor a fellow like *Griggs*, who cannot stand up for himself. I have read other stories by Franklin that I considered much better.

I would like to see another story like "The Cad," which keeps a fellow up at night to see how it turns out. I like old knight errant or Revolutionary tales once in a while, too, also a love-story, if it is not too mushy, but has lots of action, like one I read some time ago. I have forgotten the title; perhaps you will recollect:

A young man strikes an older man, knocking him down, and thinking he has killed him, he runs away and hobbos out West, where he gets work on a big irrigating project. Enemies try to dynamite the dam, but are caught, the young man being wounded in the fight, and the girl nurses him while he is down and out—a good story all the way through.

I think "The Clutch of Siberia," in the October number, is fine, so is the Log-Book. Keep it going. I think I have bought every magazine you have got out, but I have always stuck to THE ARGOSY and let the others slide, all except the *Railroad Man's*, which I think is O. K. We only read six magazines at our house, and only three of us to read them, too.

### Welcome Words from a Brother Editor.

It's praise from Sir Hubert, indeed, when a fellow editor sends such cheery words as these along with the cash as does E. D. K. of Alma, Kansas:

I enclose \$1.50 for renewal. I have not missed a number of THE ARGOSY for fifteen years, and hope not to miss it in the next fifteen. One-fifty, two-fifty, or three-fifty—it's worth it. I am glad to add the odd fifty for the increased size.

### Preliminary Sounds from "A Call to Arms."

Out of the South (Atlanta, Georgia) H. M. S. sends these congratulatory lines about the magazine, with especial reference to two of its authors. The sequel to "The Taking of the Liberator," and "The Chase of the Concession," setting forth further and very much up-to-date adventures of *Edward Hemmett* and *Stephen Girton* in Guanama, will appear as the book-length novel in the January ARGOSY.

I have noticed the many cheery commendations on the story, "Heroes Both," which appeared as the book-length novel in the July ARGOSY. I want to add my letter to those you have already received and state that it was one of the best stories that has been published in THE ARGOSY during the past year.

Some time ago I wrote you regarding the



stories "The Taking of the Liberator" and "The Chase of the Concession," published during the latter part of 1904, both written by Edgar Franklin. I was answered through the Log-Book that you were expecting some more stories soon from the pen of Mr. Franklin of the same nature. As yet I have failed to notice these stories, and I want you to know that I am still watching with an eagle eye for them. Since the publication of these two tales Mr. Franklin has, of course, written some excellent stories. How could he do otherwise? But I consider the two just mentioned two of the best Mr. Franklin ever gave THE ARGOSY, and I sincerely hope that another like them will not be long in "coming up."

The pace THE ARGOSY is setting certainly demands some more stories to keep step with these, and, in this connection, I can't see how any one can find fault with THE ARGOSY—unless it is because it is only published once a month.

### He Didn't Like "Between Two Alibis."

On C. H. P.'s own head fall the bricks that will undoubtedly be hurled after other readers spy this roast of his from Chickasha, Oklahoma, for the universally praised story by Mr. Perry. "Roy Burns's Handicap" began in January and ended in May, 1911.

Here's to the Greater ARGOSY. Long may it wave, but please don't let it wave over "Between Two Alibis." I think a good name for that would be "Seven Months of Misery." It was the only bad story.

Tell my old friend *Hawkins* "Hello!" and not to worry about the bad boys that throw bricks at him. Why not some good stories about Kansas? I am a Kansan, but live in this place, so don't get me mixed.

So many people have registered kicks against "Roy Burns's Handicap" that I would like to know when it came out. Here's hoping you print a story about Wichita, Kansas. So-long.

### Another Early Number ARGOSY Reader.

Still the contest for the post of being THE ARGOSY's oldest reader goes on. Here is a very promising candidate for the position in the person of W. H. G., of Nashville, Tennessee, who is informed that "In the Punjab," "The Sepoy Mutiny," and "The Siege of Sebastopol," were not published in THE ARGOSY.

I note in the October issue that a correspondent lays claim to being one of the very oldest readers of THE ARGOSY. I believe I can surpass his record a little bit. I remember distinctly that I was in my twelfth year when I noticed a paper in the yard of my home and picked it up. It was *The Golden*

*Argosy*, which was being distributed free to introduce the paper. I read that copy and every succeeding copy up to the present time. Maybe your correspondent can recall "The Gold on Flattop Mountain."

In those days our town of Nashville had a population of 43,000. Now it has grown to 130,000, and Vanderbilt, our big college of the South, is to play Harvard this year.

### Sticking His Oar Into the Log-Book.

The new ARGOSY certainly strikes the fancy of B. J. G., of Goshen, New York. I'm sorry I can't oblige him with any more *Hawkins* stories. Poor *Hawkins*, indeed! How could you expect the fellow to survive the cruel blows that have been dealt him?

I say "hunch" for THE ARGOSY. I have been a contented reader of THE ARGOSY and *The All-Story* for five years, but have never stuck my oar into the Log-Book before. I take great pleasure in reading this department, as it is interesting to see the comments of other readers. It shows that our likes and dislikes are not all alike.

Now as for me, I like the stories one and all. Of course, I have my favorites, but I have never read a story in either magazine that I did not like. And I don't miss any of them. Give me Fred V. Greene, Jr., for good, snappy stories to drive away the blues. But you certainly have to hand it to Mr. A. P. Terhune on historical stories. Poor *Hawkins* doesn't seem to be in favor, judging by the comments in the Log-Book, but I like him and always read about him first, and wonder what he is going to do next. Let Mr. Franklin come with more of his stories.

I think the new ARGOSY is a great improvement. The book-length novels are great. "Heroes Both" and "At Every Turn" can't be beat, for there is action in every line. The short stories in the October number surpass any I have read. They seem to be coming better all the time.

### Why Is THE ARGOSY Like a Hard-Boiled Egg?

Herewith a letter from another enthusiast who will find additional satisfaction in putting to rout the theories of his Doubting Thomas friend. Leo K. writes from Schenectady, New York:

THE ARGOSY is like a hard-boiled egg: it can't be beat. All of your stories are good. "Between Two Alibis" was great, also "Where Nothing Got Away." Also "Every Hand Against Him" was first-class. My favorites are Lebar, Terhune, McCulley, and Greene, Jr. The new ARGOSY is fine. I like complete stories best, such as "Heroes Both," "Cleared for Action," and "At Every Turn."

I would like very much to see this letter in print, as a friend of mine said that the

letters in the Log-Book are not real. If he sees mine he'll change his mind.

### This Letter Will Make Greene Blue.

After all this sweetness and honey, it's about time I got my head out of the clouds and came down to earth with a good, hard kick. This one is administered by a lady, too—what do you know about that? But *place aux dames*, as they say in Paris, and here's a slap at Greene, Jr., straight from the shoulder. Ella P. H., of Miami, Arizona, furnishes us with this spice of variety:

You have been kind enough to ask us for our opinions from time to time regarding the stories published in THE ARGOSY, and so far mine has always been good. If there was one or two stories which did not exactly come up to the mark, I just did not read them and forgot it. But I am bound, in all honesty, as a former admirer of your magazine to tell you that the last two numbers have been—well, let us say, punk.

Now you laud Mr. Fred V. Greene's stories to the sky, while a great many have told you just what they thought of his "Shooting at Big D," so I made up my mind to just charge that up to the punk list and let it go at that. I was very much interested in your arguments to prove that it ended right. To my mind *Monny* had plenty of time to practise shooting, and could have won easily or at least lost and took his lawping. But now you are running "Making a Fan of Him." I had intended to pass that one up till I noted in the Log-Book that it was by one of your favorites (or are you simply experimenting with the reading public?) so I read it as far as it has gone, and I assure you that I shall not buy the October number simply to learn that *Lonnie Flack* lost the game and that nut married *Margaret*.

### Protests Against Small and Dainty Heroine.

In striking contrast to the foregoing here is a communication from J. M., Rock Island, Illinois, with whom Mr. Greene appears to be a special favorite. Yes, *Cord* is Lord of the Chicago Americans, and *Vord* is not Wood, but Ford, the star pitcher of the New York Americans. I think that J. M. will find the hero and heroine of Terhune's new Revolutionary story, "The Trouble Hunter," to begin next month, will neither of them possess the failings to which he alludes.

I have been a constant reader of THE ARGOSY for fifteen years, and a friend to books, magazines, and baseball. I'm a semi-pro ball-player, write a little on the side, so I hesitate before offering criticism on your stories.

I'll just say that I detest that *Hawkins* business. I like a story that appeared some years ago, called "A Deal in the Dark." I am on the road so much that I can't save my magazines. I enjoy the Log-Book and think it is a great idea. In the criticism of the readers authors can see where they can improve quite often.

I like the serials best. I'm interested in "Making a Fan of Him." Who is the player referred to as *Vord*? *Cord* means Lord, but unless *Vord* is Wood, with Boston, I can't place him. I have placed all the rest.

I would enjoy the stories you publish about the Revolution better if the author would not make the hero a big, ignorant, slow-witted loon, and the heroine a small, dainty little article who is always making the hero toe the mark. But altogether THE ARGOSY is the greatest magazine in the world.

### Boosting the Wright Stuff.

Poor Mr. Greene! With him this month it seems to be a case of "Off again, on again, gone again, Finnegan!" Here's a reader, from the neighborhood of Philadelphia, where the scenes of his last story were laid, handing it out to the latter in no uncertain terms. I have in stock a two-part novelette by Richardson Wright, which will appear in February and March, I will tell Francis G. C., of Merion, Pennsylvania.

I cannot refrain from expressing my appreciation of what I consider to be without question the best short-story magazine published. THE ARGOSY's stories are of a decidedly better plane than those of its competitors, if it may be said to have any competitors, and I look forward to its arrival every month with increasing pleasure.

Mr. Terhune's stories are excellent, and you can count me among the loyal champions of *Hawkins*, which I find decidedly entertaining by virtue of Mr. Franklin's refreshing originality. I am bound to admit that I consider "Making a Fan of Him" very poor; it is in the first place technically inaccurate, and is of a decidedly amateurish character.

"The Clutch of Siberia," in the October number, was a corker; it had a ring of the accurate to it that made it instructive as well as intensely interesting. Let's have some more stuff from Mr. Wright.

### He Calls It a Dream.

By a tight squeak I am enabled to print the first opinion received regarding our November book-length novel, from M. H. B., of New York City.

The story, "Breaking Into West Point," is a dream. It is the finest story I have read in some time. I hope in the near future Captain Harrington will write another similar—by next January anyhow.

# Watching the World



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*Up and down—in and out—  
rain and shine—year in and  
year out—wearing out the  
steps—wearing out themselves  
—but getting nowhere—that's  
the life tragedy of thousands  
who would have reached high  
positions if they only had the  
right training.*

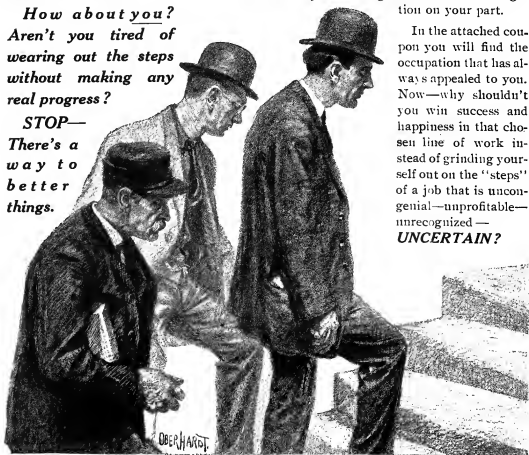
*How about you?  
Aren't you tired of  
wearing out the steps  
without making any  
real progress?*

**STOP—**  
*There's a  
way to  
better  
things.*

Every month, over four hundred men of all ages and occupations **voluntarily** report advancement in position and salary wholly due to I. C. S. training. You simply cannot dodge a fact like that. It means that these men have stopped "wearing out the steps" that lead nowhere, and have made a place for themselves in the world.

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**UNCERTAIN?**



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Refrigeration Engineer  
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Metal Mining  
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.  
Stationary Engineer  
Textile Manufacturing  
Gas Engines  
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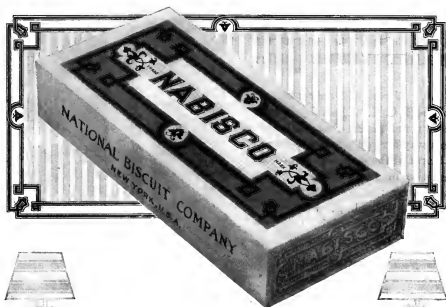
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helpful, inspiring; in life's  
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collaborator—  
my jimmy pipe!

No man is my friend who  
would say of you one unkindly  
word; you have earned the best  
the tongue can bestow, my  
good friend, my true friend—  
my jimmy pipe!

Deny me not a taste of  
tobacco from your fragrant bowl;  
you have won your reward,  
your rest;  
but to me, your charm is like  
the spell of magic; I yearn for just  
one more cool, soothing smoke  
ere I lay you in peace and quiet,  
so well deserved—  
my jimmy pipe!

Blackened by long years of faithful  
service; ready, willing, eager to give  
me happiness; beauty  
adorns you not, I confess;  
but best of all my earthly possessions,  
I pay you homage  
—a tribute born of enduring  
affection,  
my good friend, my true friend,  
my jimmy pipe!

## Get out your jimmy pipe!

And get it via the speed line, because  
time's flying and it's long since Prince  
Albert tobacco sounded the recall of jimmy pipes from atticrafters, dark, musty  
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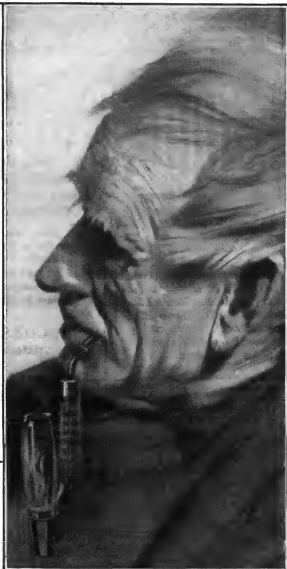
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with a jimmy pipe, because it's tobacco that won't bite tongues, *because it can't!* A  
patented process cuts out the sting! You give yourself a joy smoke! Put that old  
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The greatest comfort-smoke of all. Made of the finest Burley leaf possible to secure. Aged to a rare mellowness—a smoothness that delights pipe smokers.

Ask your dealer for Velvet

*Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.*



10¢ TINS  
HANDY 5¢ BAGS  
One pound glass humidor jars

NOT A BIT OF BITE

"Square deal or money back"

## BUY NOW

Write for **FREE CATALOG**  
Over 1500 handsome illustrations.



8 months' credit—No red tape. Buy your holiday gifts this way.

## PAY LATER

Brilliant Jewelry Co., Dept. E.  
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## 12 Art Panels 50c

Beautiful Duo Tint Reproductions of Famous Paintings—Panel Size 7x10

These pictures are real gems—the most exquisite portrayals of

### "WOMAN BEAUTIFUL"

ever shown in one collection. We send a full set of 12 in handsome Art Portfolio, packed flat and safe delivery guaranteed, together with lifelike miniatures of 70 other beautiful and catchy duo pictures, for only 50c, coin, money order or U. S. stamps. Send at once. Money back if not satisfied. Or send \$1.25 for same set hand-colored.

**Florentine Art Company**  
Dept. C12, 808 Schiller Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

**FREE** Order yours at once and we will include "Free" a beautiful duo picture in colors.

# ÆTNA-IZED?



## **\$3,250 INSURANCE FOR \$10**

### **LIFE and ACCIDENT Insurance under the famous ÆTNA TEN DOLLAR COMBINATION**

Issued by the **ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**, of Hartford, Connecticut—the largest company in the world writing Life, Accident, Health and Liability Insurance.

In extent and variety of protection this policy is without a rival.

For **\$10 a Year** (in "Preferred" Occupations) this Policy pays:

**\$2,000** for death from Travel, Elevator or Burning Building Accident.

**\$1,000** for death from Ordinary Accident.

**\$2,000** for loss of limbs or sight as a result of Travel Accident.

**\$1,000** for loss of limbs or sight as a result of Ordinary Accident.

The above amounts accumulate Ten Per Cent. each year for five years, without additional cost.

**\$250 FOR DEATH FROM ANY CAUSE—No Medical Examination Required.**

The Accumulations, Double Benefits and Life Insurance provided by this Ten Dollar Combination make possible the payment of **\$3,250** at a cost of less than **THREE CENTS A DAY** in addition to weekly indemnity for total or partial disability from accident.

**SEND IN THE COUPON TO-DAY**

**Ætna Life Insurance Co. (Drawer 1341) Hartford, Conn.** Argosy. Tear off

I am under 55 years of age and in good health. Tell me about **ÆTNA Ten Dollar Combination**.

My name, business address and occupation are written below.



"Harvest"—by Vincent Aderente.

## Prosperity

There has been a bumper crop.

This is because the tillers of the soil have been industrious, and the rain and the sun have favored their plantings.

There has been industrial activity.

The makers of things in factories have been busy. They have had work to do and pay for doing it.

There has been commercial success.

The people who buy and sell and fetch and carry have been doing a lot of business and they have been paid for doing it.

The country is prosperous because all the people have been busy.

Good crops and good times can be enjoyed only when the Government maintains peace and harmony.

This task of the Government is made comparatively easy because the American

people have been enabled to become so well acquainted with each other. They know and understand one another. They are like one family.

The producer and consumer, no matter where they live, are close together.

This is largely due to our wonderful facilities for intercommunication. We excel in our railways, our mails and our telegraphs, and, most of all, in our telephones.

The Bell System has fourteen million miles of wire spread over all parts of the country. Each day there are twenty-five million telephones talking all the way from twenty feet to two thousand miles long.

The raiser of crops, the maker of things, and the man of commerce, all are helped to co-operate and work together for peace and prosperity by means of the Universal telephone.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY  
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

**One Policy**

**One System**

**Universal Service**

# POPULAR EDUCATIONAL FOOD CAMPAIGN



*Do you know how to combine ordinary foods to produce health?*

## DIET VERSUS DRUGS

*I can tell you without technical terms, the best combinations and proportions for your needs.*

### GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF FOODS



### I Have No Foods To Sell

Indigestible, irritating foods and the retention of their waste matter are the cause of homeliness (double chin, dull eyes, bad skin, fagged face, etc.) dullness and disease. The foods which cause expectation, catarrh, cough, constipation, tumors, etc., are specified in the free booklets. Wrongly combined foods either ferment, cause gas, poison, or kill; e. g., gastritis, appendicitis, apoplexy, etc. Drugs never have cured disease, never can and never will cure.

Body rebuilt and purified by a suitable diet, free from irritating and indigestible materials.

### Striking Effects of Different Food Combinations

An excess of starchy and fatty combinations of foods will make you sluggish; it will give you dull, splitting headaches, lack of memory and concentration, drowsiness and inertia. A complete change to "digestible" brainy foods (suitable meat, game, fish and dairy foods, combined with suitable vegetables and fruits according to the new brainy diet plan) will produce the most marked improvements in a few weeks.

One dropped a consultant lost 18 pounds of overweight in the first week and returned to business.

Another, a thin man, after being out of work nearly a year through weakness, was restored in three weeks to hard work as a carpenter at full pay. He such cases the change from a ringing, death-producing diet to energizing foods caused a literal transformation.

Another patient, deaf in the right ear, owing to a discharge caused by an excess of non-making foods (cream, butter, cheese, etc.), was completely relieved of deafness and catarrh by taking correct combinations of suitable foods.

A case of kidney and bladder trouble of ten years' standing was cured from a surgical operation, and the objectionable discharge stopped within ten days, because the loss of weight was due entirely to the constant irritation from certain irritating foods and drinks.

A chronic sufferer, weighing 410 pounds, reduced over 150 pounds (a suitable life, under many witnesses), gaining strength, and firmer flesh, and losing rheumatism. Many well-known diseased persons have been taught how to cure themselves by brainy foods during 23 years, by S. Lepp, in England (see the League "Bulletin") and during 3 years by the writer in America.

During thirteen years of personal experiments, I have learned to produce in myself various diseases, each by eating certain wrong foods for a few days or weeks. They are: Rheumatism, catarrh, sore throat, constipation, double chin, swollen glands, kidney trouble, shortness of breath, rough scaly skin, dandruff, warts, boils, pimples with white pus, blackheads, rash, dry hair, and numerous other symptoms. AND I CAN ELIMINATE THESE SYMPTOMS OF ILL HEALTH IN A FEW DAYS BY CORRECT FOODS.

### FOUR INSTRUCTIVE BOOKLETS SENT FOR TEN CENTS

"The lists of daily foods which increase brain power, promote longevity, cure congested liver, etc., are worth untold dollars."

(1) The Brainy Diet Cure

(2) Diet vs Drugs

(3) Effects of Foods

(4) Key to Longevity

Send addresses of your sick friends to

C. H. BRINKLER, FOOD EXPERT, DEPT. 82M,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

### HISTORY OF MEDICINE

#### ANCIENT PHARMACY



#### MODERN PHARMACY MORE DESTRUCTIVE





"This will fetch them!"

**YES;** our wholesome Tomato Soup has a mighty "fetching" quality about it in every sense of the word; and equally for the young and the old.

All people and all tastes seem to agree on

## *Campbell's* TOMATO SOUP

The epicure approves it. The romping hungry school-boy craves it and thrives on it. The brain-worker, the nervous dyspeptic, and the man who wants a "good square meal" all find satisfaction in its tempting flavor and nourishing quality. There's hardly a day in the year when you will not find this perfect soup exactly what you want.

Hadn't you better order a dozen *today*?  
Take a look at the pantry shelf and see.

21 kinds 10c a can

Asparagus	Clam Chowder	Pes
Beef	Consommé	Pepper Pot
Bouillon	Julienne	Printanier
Celery	Mock Turtle	Tomato
Chicken	Mulligatawny	Tomato-Okra
Chicken Gumbo (Okra)	Mutton Broth	Vegetable
Clam Bouillon	Ox Tail	Vermicelli-Tomato

Little Elizabeth Lou,  
With Campbell's  
Soup in view,  
Cries to her mother:  
"O give me another!"  
While Doggie is  
dogging the two.

**Look for the red-and-white label**



# The Most Exquisite New Ideas in Watch Cases



Take your choice of these superb new style watches sent without a cent down—on approval (Payable at \$2.50 a Month)

**The Movement**—In connection with our sweeping fight on trust methods we have selected our *finest* highest grade watch for a special offer direct to the people. **Material:** The best that money can buy. **Workmen:** World renowned experts in their line. **The Jewels:** 19 finest grade selected genuine imported rubies and sapphires, absolutely flawless. (It is well understood in the railroad business that 19 jewels is the proper number for maximum efficiency.) **Factory Fitted** and factory tested. **Adjustment:** Adjusted to temperature, isochronism and positions. The most rigid tests.

**Since the \$1,000 Challenge** was made to the giant factories four years ago, why have they not answered? Why have not these factories produced a watch equal to the Burlington? This challenge did not ask our competitors to produce a watch better than the Burlington. NO. If they should produce a watch equal to the Burlington we should be the losers. Our \$1,000 still lies in the bank for competitors to cover.

## No Money Down

We ship the watch on approval, prepaid (your choice of ladies' or gentlemen's open face or hunting case.) You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing—not one cent unless you want the great offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

**Burlington Watch Co.** 19th St. & Marshall Blvd. Dept. 1079 Chicago

## Startling Watch Offer

**READ! A Watch Offer Without Parallel**

Write for our free book on watches; a book that posts you on watches and watch values—explains reasons for our most remarkable rock-bottom-price offer **DIRECT TO YOU** on the highest grade Burlington.

**\$2.50 a Month at the Rock-Bottom Price**

To assure us that every body will quickly accept this introductory offer, we allow cash or easy payments, as preferred. You get the watch at the rock-bottom price, the same price that even the wholesale dealer must pay.

**Now Write** for the free book. It

will tell you what you ought to know before you even examine a watch. It tells all the inside facts about watch prices, and will explain the many superior points of the Burlington over the double-priced products. Just send your name and address today.

No letter necessary just the coupon will do.

Name.....

Address.....

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19th Street and Marshall Blvd.  
Dept. 1079 Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen: Please send me absolutely free and prepaid one of your new watch books explaining about your anti-trust fight, and giving the inside facts about the watch industry. Also give full particulars of how I may obtain a fully adjusted 19-jewel gold strata genuine Burlington Special, or approval, at the rock-bottom price, on terms of \$2.50 a month. No obligations on me.

# Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen



## THE Present with a Future

Waterman's Ideal is the useful sort of a present that is increasingly advocated. This pen means an end to inky fingers and scratchy penmanship, and is a convenience that will facilitate a friend's business or social writing for years to come. Waterman's Ideals are of a known, superior quality—be sure of the genuine. Pens to suit every hand. Exchangeable after Christmas. Avoid substitutes. *Send for illustrated booklet.*

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Xmas Boxes*

**Safety**  
Platinum or Chrome  
Fountain Size  
No. 1234 V.S. \$2.50  
Also made in  
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Gold Banded  
\$1.00 extra.

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